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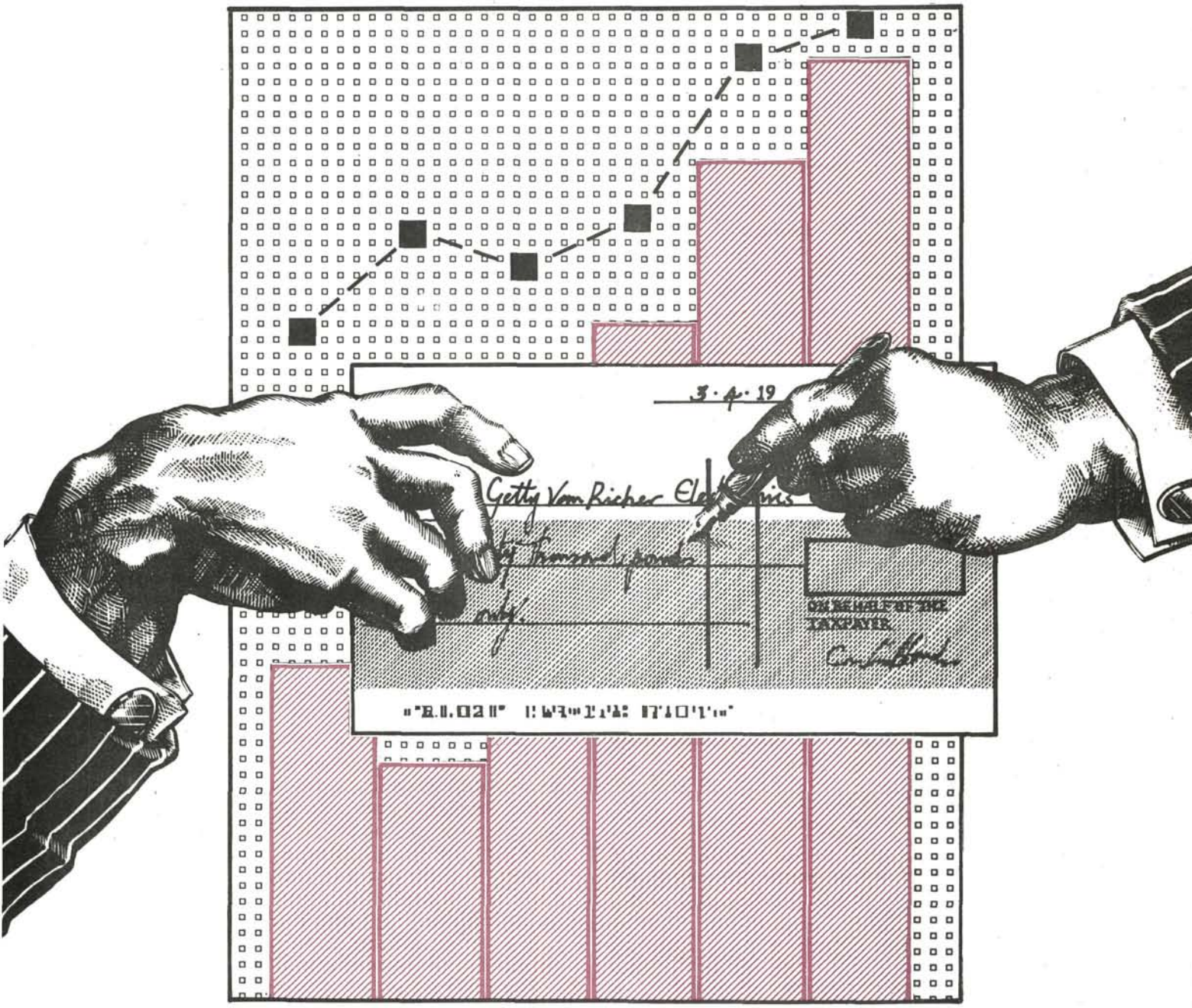

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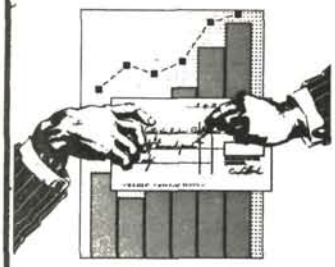

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New Statesman

Vol 109 No 2828 31 May 1985

Official Secrets Act rides again

THEY'RE AT it again. The government is exposed as conducting an immoral and probably illegal policy, this time in helping the Americans try to bankrupt Nicaragua. It is revealed that the Whitehall machine has gone to great lengths to pretend that this is not what is happening; and that as part of this cover-up a government minister, in this case Malcolm Rifkind of the Foreign Office, has knowingly lied to the House of Commons in order to deceive it.

The result? No public outcry. No demand from the House of Commons Select Committee on Foreign Affairs for an explanation. No offer of resignation from the Minister. Instead the junior clerical officer in the Overseas Development Administration, who sent copies of the incriminating documents to an MP, is threatened with prosecution under the Official Secrets Act, even though there is no conceivable way in which what he did could prejudice the security of the United Kingdom.

No doubt in the end the Attorney General and the Director of Public Prosecutions will decide that they do not want the embarrassment of another Clive Ponting trial on their hands and will not proceed with a prosecution of the clerk, Geoff Dennis. If one jury acquitted Clive Ponting for his Belgrano leaks, another is even more likely to find that the deployment of the Official Secrets Act in this case is even more absurd. At least the Ponting case centred on military matters and potentially secret information.

For all that, however, Geoff Dennis — currently suspended without pay — is almost certain to lose his job on the grounds that his action in anonymously sending documents to George Foulkes, Labour's spokesman on Latin America, was a breach of his terms of employment. So the case raises all over again the politics and the ethics of 'leaking' by civil servants.

The problem is not new. Civil servants have always leaked. Those who leaked information to Winston Churchill so that he could embarrass the (Conservative) government about lack of rearmament before 1939 are now classed as positive heroes. No one thought to turn the Official Secrets Act on them. The issue then is the same as that facing a Dennis today. What is a civil servant to do in our system when faced with clear evidence that the government is acting illegally or immorally and is lying in public, and more especially to Parliament, about it?

It would be different if we had a more open system of government and a more effective House of Commons. If the ethos of Whitehall was that the process of government was not classified unless there were genuine national security or other grounds for classification, it would be different. If the practice of Whitehall was that documents, other than those with a continuing relevance to national security, were made public within a reasonably short period of time, then the system would be inhibited from cooking up lies to cover and justify bad policies — in this case the policy of assisting the Americans to deny financial aid to Nicaragua but claiming that each request was being turned down 'on technical grounds'.

The fact that Rifkind felt the need to lie to the Commons about government policy is in itself the conclusive proof that the government is ashamed of and unwilling to justify what it is doing. If the House of Commons and its select committees had or

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used powers to obtain papers and effectively question ministers and civil servants, things again might be different. But select committees have not developed as some hoped they might. As the Foreign Affairs committee showed in the Ponting case, a select committee is usually a poodle so far as a legislative check on the executive is concerned.

In theory civil servants faced with a moral and professional dilemma over the actions of a government they are supposed to be serving should raise the matter with a superior, or should resign in protest. The theory is fine, but in practice quite unhelpful for people who are trying to make a career in a supposedly apolitical service. Take, for example, possibly the greatest recent political and moral blunder by a British government — Suez in 1956. What good would it then have done for a junior clerk to confess misgivings to a superior about how Parliament was being misled and how many civil service resignations followed?

So there will continue to be leaks when governments lie and double-deal. Under this government there has been a torrent. To the civil servant who decides to leak one can only offer the practical advice that, so long as you don't admit it even under pressure, even the serious crimes squad will scarcely ever be able to put a finger on you. Some (indeed many) may find this attitude distasteful. But is it less distasteful than, for example in this instance, the action of a government that secretly joins with the Americans in a policy of trying to bankrupt another country, while claiming piously that it is doing nothing of the kind?

This brings us, though, to the practical questions of what those in receipt of leaked material should do. The Dennis case is another object lesson in how such situations should *not* be handled. Between them, George Foulkes and the *Observer* handled the material in a grossly irresponsible way. It was open to either to take the line that they prefer not to deal in leaked documents — though it would be an unusual Opposition spokesperson or newspaper that did so.

But given that Foulkes decided to use the material to gain political advantage and the *Observer* used it to make a story, both owed an elementary duty of care to protect the identity of the then still anonymous Dennis. In fact, by taking no care with the documents and in the end publishing a facsimile of part of a minute bearing a cynical manuscript comment a trail was laid that within 48 hours pointed to Geoff Dennis. After Sarah Tisdall and Clive Ponting such incompetent behaviour by persons who have every interest in protecting present and future leakers is quite simply unforgiveable. □

Ten years down the Euro-line

TEN YEARS AGO we were all in the throes of the Great EEC Referendum. To leave or not to leave, that was the question. As Nicholas Faith records on page 18, it was an entirely rigged debate — rigged by the master juggler of modern British politics, Harold Wilson.

The issues seemed important at the time and crossed conventional party lines. The Labour Right, the Conservative Left and Centre and big business all had their reasons for saying that it would be a disaster if we voted to come out. Against them there was an odd Right-Left alliance in favour of coming out — the Enoch Powell-Peter Shore-Tony Benn axis. They deployed the various arguments that it would be a political and/or an economic disaster if we stayed in.

The truth is that all the arguments on both sides were wildly exaggerated. The constraints on the freedom of action of British governments of either Left or Right have been substantial over the last decade, but membership of the EEC has not been serious amongst them. The only real effect has been to intensify the regime of protection for British agriculture at the expense of the British consumer, but no British government since the war has shown much eagerness to take on the combination of vested interests entrenched in the National Farmers Union and the Ministry of Agriculture itself.

For the rest, the real international economic and industrial forces at work have involved the transnational spread of big business — rooted in no one national environment, accountable to no one nation's institutions. This is the form of neo-capitalism that has been setting the framework inside which national politicians have the illusion that they are setting national priorities and executing national policies.

But within this form of capitalism the 'State' machinery created to deal with conflicts — increasingly between capital and labour rather than nation States — can produce some progressive measures. The British government and business money have been instrumental in blocking or weakening many of them. It can be argued that this is merely the consequence of a strong British labour movement which has traditionally relied less on the State for protection than, say, Italian workers. But that holds no water when it comes to moves to create European laws affording workers new rights under the new conditions of multi-national companies. If we can't compaign to get out, we should certainly fight to make the EEC political machinery work in favour of Western Europe's workers and consumers. For, whatever the arguments were ten years ago, it *is* now an illusion to think that it would be easy, or indeed possible, for a country with the limited scope of the United Kingdom to opt out of the European economic system in order to try a prolonged experiment of socialism in one country. The unaccountable market power of multinational business can only be contained and made accountable on the basis of the main European societies and politicians operating together. □

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'STOLEN PAPERS' TELL OF DOUNREAY PLANS

SINCE the Department of Energy sneaked out its major announcement last Friday afternoon about a new European plutonium fuel reprocessing plant at Dounreay on the north coast of Scotland, some bizarre and worrying things have been happening. ROB EDWARDS reports

ALLEGEDLY stolen papers passed to the *Glasgow Herald* have shed important new light on the planning permission for the £200 million plant shortly to be lodged by British Nuclear Fuels plc (BNFL) and the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) with Highland Regional Council. They reveal that use may be made of the former aluminium smelter wharf at Invergorden on the Cromarty firth to ship plutonium between the new fast reactors planned for France and Germany and the proposed plant at Dounreay itself.

The papers describe a private meeting in Edinburgh on 9 May between BNFL, the UKAEA and the Highland Chief Planning Officer, Mr Cameron, to discuss the planning application. They make it clear that the nuclear industry is far from happy about the attitude taken at the meeting by Cameron.

The confidential documents — which when discovered were sodden and badly burned — were spotted by the side of the road in Cambuslang near Glasgow by a man walking his dog last week. Having heard Friday's news about Dounreay he picked them up and handed them over to the *Glasgow Herald*, which printed a short report about them on Saturday. The following day the newspaper was visited by lawyers acting for the nuclear industry who claimed that the papers must have been stolen from their Edinburgh office. The *Herald* returned the documents to the lawyers.

Protest group banned

Meanwhile fierce local antagonism towards the newly formed action group concerned about the Dounreay expansion plans (*NS* 24 May) has resulted in the group being banned from using the community education centre in Wick, where it had met without problems for the last three weeks. The Nuclear Reprocessing Concern Group, itself locally based, was informed of the ban just a few hours before a meeting planned for Monday evening.

The divisional director of education for Caithness, Ken Macleod, says that he classified this as a 'sensitive let'. He has received strong written representations from local individuals who feel that the group are a threat to employment opportunities in the area. After he'd consulted regional councillors on Highland's education committee he decided to implement the ban until the matter could be considered by the committee at its next meeting on 6 June.

Trade unionists at Dounreay, which is currently run by the UKAEA, have warmly welcomed the proposed new plant. But they're anxious to find out more about precisely how BNFL will be involved.

They're mindful of the enthusiasm of that company's senior management for privatisation, and keenly aware of pay differentials that favour BNFL workers. And they're understandably concerned about BNFL's public image — one that won't be greatly enhanced by the company's appearance in court next week charged in connection with a beach contamination incident in 1983.

Whether or not there'll be a public enquiry into the development is entirely at the discretion of the Secretary of State for Scotland, George Younger. Although Highland Region is likely to give consent to the application. Younger is going to find it difficult to resist the considerable political pressure for an enquiry that he'll face from elsewhere in Britain.

In the meantime, for reasons too murky to recount, it seems that Dounreay has revived its press relations strategy: its spokesperson Les Rowe has decided not to talk to the *New Statesman*. ●

DoE boxes clever over GLEB funds

THE GOVERNMENT has refused further funding for the Greater London Enterprise Board (GLEB), set up by the GLC to create jobs in London. But because GLEB has created or saved 3,500 jobs for less than it costs to keep people on the dole, Environment Minister Patrick Jenkin's officials are having to get clever about avoiding the blame for stopping money for successful projects.

The Department of Environment (DoE), which under last year's 'Paving-The-Way Bill' (see also below) *has to approve grants to voluntary bodies and agencies like enterprise boards, astutely agreed to allow the first quarter of this year's £20 million budget for GLEB, but not funds due to the metropolitan counties' enterprise boards.*

Now the DoE won't give GLEB any more money until arrangements are completed with the 32 London boroughs to whom GLEB is supposed to become accountable for money it invests. The Tory boroughs are being predictably slow.

This has driven a wedge between GLEB and the smaller enterprise boards in the six met counties.

John Rentoul

David Hoffman

THE INJURED face of Parvals Kahn, one of the 'Newham 7' (NS *17 May) and a teenage co-defendant in the Old Bailey trial relating to incidents in East London in 1984. It's alleged that Parvals Kahn was beaten up last week on the premises of the Old Bailey itself by prison officers for refusing to eat a pork pie. His solicitor is taking out High Court proceedings against the Home Office, for lack of any names as yet for the alleged assailants. City of London police are investigating. Meanwhile, three pickets were arrested this Wednesday.*

DoE grant delays 'a taste of what's yet to come'

STILL being messed about by the Department of the Environment as we go to press are three of the section 137 GLC grants in which the government took powers to intervene (section 7, Local Government Interim Provisions Act 1984): the Women's Peace Bus (£41,363), *Spare Rib* **(£73,604), and** *Searchlight* **(listed as £22,470).**

Spare Rib took on three workers on succeeding with its application to the GLC. They've been on half wages while waiting for DoE consents: 'it's causing great strain and frustration, not just personally but because it puts the magazine in such difficulty. The money was to have helped with overheads, to get us on a firmer financial footing'.

Still rolling, but only just, is the Women's Peace Bus, which tours London reaching women through exhibitions, literature and videos (and is no doubt anathema to Michael Heseltine). It has lost three workers thanks to the DoE's delays. 'It was shattering', says worker Janice Owens, 'but they left because there's no money for wages. It would be a tragedy if we have to close. There's nothing to take our place'.

Searchlight has been disconcerted to discover that the DoE is putting out press releases (eg 3 May) listing its proposed GLC grant as £22,470 when in fact, says *Searchlight*, the figure is £16,000, for wages and office equipment.

'Noticeable' grants

'These grants are noticeable by their delays' says the GLC: 'we're pressing the DoE very strongly, but it's giving no indication of reasons for the hold up'. Women's committee chair Valerie Wise fears 'this could be a pattern for coming months when we submit more applications for approval — and is all this a foretaste of what's to come for hundreds of voluntary groups if the GLC is abolished next year?'

As for the DoE: 'We're considering if the proposed expenditure would be expedient. Each is being individually looked at to see if it's justifiable expenditure. Obviously we'll be looking at all kinds of factors. It's a mixture of the sums of money and their purposes'. Rejecting the grant to the London Lesbian & Gay Centre (*NS* 10 May) DoE minister spoke, when reviewing its purposes, of there being 'no evidence' that intended users 'constitute an economically deprived group of the population'. This contentious approach is being challenged by the GLC.

Fiona Dobson

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Ascension island to be test area for Star Wars?

THE BRITISH ISLAND of Ascension, in the South Atlantic, is one of only two target areas which can be used for long range US ballistic missile tests, according to official American military studies recently obtained by Pacific island campaigners. The island may eventually be developed for 'Star Wars' ballistic missile defence research.

Because of local opposition to the second American missile target area, Kwajalein Atoll in the Marshall Islands — a US-administered 'trust territory' — the US bases on Ascension could become vitally important for some 'Star Wars' anti-missile tests. No-one lives on Ascension but British and American military and intelligence personnel.

The Ascension island target area has already been involved in developing MIRVed multiple nuclear warheads for Poseidon, Trident, and 'Advanced Trident' missiles, the documents indicate. Britain used Ascension as the main support base for the Falklands war, and still operates a 'sigint' electronic spy station as well as utilising the US-built airstrip for flights to and from Port Stanley.

Ballistic missiles being tested are normally fired from the Eastern Test Range at Cape Canaveral, Florida, or the western equivalent, Vandenberg Air Force Base, in California. Missiles launched from California impact at or near Kwajalein.

Pacific protests

But a growing campaign in the south Pacific islands demands that the US now give up the military use of Kwajalein; and the Strategic Systems Test Support Study report, prepared for the US Ballistic Missile Defence Systems Command in 1981, acknowledges that its main purpose was to consider 'a contingency island location if political stresses force evacuation of [Kwajalein Missile Range]'.

The study gives a comprehensive description of US installations on Ascension described by the US as a 'strategic system testing instrumentation asset'. The US has installed four computers, and six separate radar and optical tracking stations on Ascension, which has an area of about 7 square miles. Information from the tracking stations has been used to improve US warhead accuracy to less than one hundred feet.

Duncan Campbell

Frantic effort to halt lead burial scheme in Cheshire

A LAST-DITCH campaign is under way in mid Cheshire to stop the county planning committee approving a 'chemical time bomb' at its meeting scheduled for next Monday (3 June). Associated Octel seeks to bury contaminated waste before quitting its lead additives site at Plumley, a farming village outside Northwich.

The firm blames new laws on anti-knock ingredients in petrol for the shutdown, which will cost 250 jobs. But dismay at more redundancies in an area already hard-hit by unemployment is nothing to the concern at the chemical burial aspect of the company's withdrawal after nearly 50 years.

The plan is to dig a 4.5 metres deep pit, lined with steel, wood and plastic, into which will be dumped poisoned equipment containing 25 tonnes of inorganic lead (solid) and a tonne of organic lead (liquid). Cheshire County Council's chief planner, John Collins, is recommending acceptance of the scheme although he admits the safety of the pit cannot be guaranteed indefinitely. 'It has to be accepted that the proposed container may deteriorate over time and could fail.'

City Syndication

The Countess of Chester — perhaps she can help?

The lack of confidence has alarmed neighbours who have already lost a battle to stop ICI storing 40,000 tonnes of the explosive gas, ethylene, underground near their homes. Every parish council in the vicinity has lodged a protest and the scheme is also being opposed by the district authorities — Vale Royal and Macclesfield Borough — and by environmental groups, including Friends of the Earth.

But the fear is the county's planning committee will give Octel the go-ahead when it considers the application on 3 June. 'And that will mean another chemical time bomb ticking in Mid Cheshire,' said one anxious campaigner.

Mary Thomson

MISCELLANY

Limb of Satan

Not content with adopting a position on abortion further to the right than the Roman Catholic church and with refusing the pass a motion condemning industrial closures in Scotland, some ministers at this May's General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (a million adherents out of a Scots population of 5 million) waxed vitriolic over the discovery of a 'notorious communist and atheist' in one of the kirk's Glasgow OAP homes. This aged agent of Beelzebub, who had actually

declined to attend a church service, is a hotter property than the ministers knew — none other than 95-year-old Harry McShane, one of the last of the Red Clydesiders and an unrepentant humanist for the last 80 years. Harry is now a Freeman of the City of Glasgow, and made it clear at last year's ceremony that he wouldn't stand (literally or metaphorically) for the National Anthem. Embarassed Labour councillors swiftly persuaded the town clerk to substitute *I Belong to Glasgow*.

Illiberal after all

It's no surprise that the Reagan administration intimidates the US press. But when Congresspersons claiming to represent the liberal democratic alternative do the same thing there's just a little less hope for the future. Recently Thomas Lantos, a minor California representative in Congress with a large reputation for liberal democratic sympathies, launched an investigation of the US General Accounting Office (GAO), the independent auditing arm of the US government. The reason was that the New Statesman *had been tipped off by an administration source that Lantos had requested a special GAO study of US arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Lantos made it clear he was looking for information to stop future US arms sales to the kingdom. This was no surprise — Lantos has publicly opposed all US arms sales to the Saudis since he came to Congress four years ago. Although his request wasn't a classified document, he was furious it leaked, and has gone in pursuit of the culprit. Anyone who recognised the* NS *came under suspicion, let alone those officials seen slipping to the rear of the bookstore opposite the White House, where copies of* NS *can be read surreptitiously. Not long ago, in a similar case* NS *also reported, GAO officials leaked a document that revealed comparable information about massive stocks of US arms Israel had acquired, and criticized US aid policy towards Israel. At the time several of Lantos' erstwhile liberal colleagues went even further — they demanded the leakers be charged with espionage. GAO is mystified about the most recent leak, especially since* NS *had printed nothing — until now.*

Your place or mine?

For some reason best known to herself the monarch has given permission for the Dirty Digger to use her palace at Hampton Court for a shindig on 11 July to celebrate 200 years of *The Times*. But those who labour by hand and brain to bring out the former Thunderer are put out to discover that they're getting almost none of the 600-odd invites. So instead they've hired a Hampton Court of their own for the same day — a public house by the Elephant & Castle, where with a cabaret including Spitting Image they'll end up having a better party than Rupe's.

Hang in there, Davids

*News of fresh confusion within the Alliance about what a hung Parliament would mean. A few weeks ago Dr Death wrote to Labour MP John Home Robertson (*East Lothian*) to say that the Alliance would try to work with 'whichever third party the electors had given the largest number of votes to. It would not therefore be ourselves deciding whether to talk to Margaret Thatcher or Neil Kinnock first. It would be the voters and I cannot see what could be more democratic than that'. Home Robertson then wrote to David Steel 'to settle an argument I have been having with some friends. . . would you follow the preference of the electorate by working with whichever third party the electors had given the largest number of votes to?' Steel replied: 'The answer to your query is "no" because we cannot automatically align ourselves with another party on an arithmetical basis — what matters is policy agreement'. If anyone gets to the bottom of this, please tell us. We promise to pass it on to the two Davids.*

P.S. How did John Home Robertson get embroiled in all this in the first place? Glad you asked. It was because he had received a computerised letter from the SDP soliciting his membership and he decided to reply. Another Labour MP who received an SDP mailing shot is Neil Kinnock. Optimism or desperation?

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TWO PARTY SYSTEM STRUGGLES TO PREVAIL

THE NEW STATESMAN annual survey of hung councils shows the increasing willingness of Labour councillors in the South of England to back the Liberal/SDP Alliance — but elsewhere the two-party system goes on trying to stay on top. JOHN RENTOUL reports

BEFORE the county council elections on 2 May, there were only three councils where Liberals or the Alliance governed with Labour support (Cheltenham, St Albans and Wyre Forest). Now in three of the newly hung counties, Cambridgeshire, Devon and Wiltshire, Labour councillors have backed — or at least not blocked — Liberal/SDP administrations.

Labour and the Alliance also generally co-operated over places on the Association of County Councils, which is influential on the teachers' employers body, the Burnham Committee.

As in the past, the pattern on hung councils is dominated by the willingness of Alliance councillors to support Conservative administrations (*NS* 13 April and 22 June 1984). This remains the commonest arrangement, in 15 of the 51 councils.

In newly hung Hertfordshire and Humberside the Alliance supported Tories retaining and taking control, and in Hastings and Milton Keynes 'all-party' administrations have collapsed to be replaced by Tory/Liberal coalitions. But in two other councils, Bradford and Stockport, Liberals withdrew support from Tory administrations — only to find that Labour preferred keeping the Tories in power to doing a deal with the Liberals.

This less edifying trend was strongly in evidence in this month's annual meetings. The Labour opposition in Oxfordshire refused to do a deal with the Liberal/SDP Alliance to keep the Tories out. Similarly, the Conservatives in Northumberland allowed Labour to retain control.

'Three-party' unease

The two main parties are generally finding it very difficult to come to terms with a three-party system. Five councils were unable to agree anything, in debates reminiscent of some rate setting meetings. Lancashire county council, where Labour had lost overall control, met from 2pm to 1.30am after the Liberals voted in a Tory chair (the equivalent of a mayor in the shire counties). The incensed Labour group refused to put its names forward for committee chairs, which the Liberals were prepared to support, and filibustered instead.

In Warwickshire the Alliance agreed to support a Labour administration in return for proportional membership of committees. The meeting went smoothly until the election for the last committee, the police committee. The Tories wheeled in three magistrate additional members and took the chair, and the entire Labour administration promptly resigned. The situation is currently unclear.

Hung councils, like hung parliaments, test the law and constitution to the limit. In Hampshire, just held by the Tories with the support of an Independent and the casting vote of the chair, councillors discovered a drafting error in the Local Government Act 1972. The Tories brought in the outgoing vice chair of the council, claiming he had an ordinary vote at the Annual Meeting. This caused uproar, but appeared to be legally valid. ●

Hung Councils

Party forming administration

CON supported by LIB/SDP
Total 15
Eastleigh
Gloucester
Grimsby
Hammersmith
Hastings
Herts*
Humberside*
Leics
Lothian
Milton Keynes
Northampton
NW Leics
Rochdale
Waltham Forest

LAB supported by LIB/SDP
Total 4
Cheshire
Exeter
Salop*
Warwicks*

CON supported by LAB
Total 6
Bradford
Brighton
Crewe & Nantwich
Oxon*
Stockport
Walsall

LAB supported by CON
Total 5
Cannock Chase
Northumberland*
Pendle
Peterborough
York

LIB/SDP supported by LAB
Total 6
Cambs*
Cheltenham
Devon*
St Albans
Wilts*
Wyre Forest

LIB supported by CON
Calderdale (Lib and Con alternate)

CON minority
Essex*
Maidstone

LAB minority
Bristol

LIB/SDP minority
Somerset*

OTHER
Total 10
Avon* (unresolved)
Beds (unresolved)
Clwyd (unresolved)
Clydesdale (Ind/SDP coalition)
Cornwall* (Alliance/Ind coalition)
Cumbria* (unresolved)
Glos* (met 29.5.85)
Lancs* (unresolved)
Newark (Ind/Lib minority)
S Somerset (Alliance supported by Ind; formerly Yeovil)

In the 2 May elections 17 new councils became hung (marked *) and one, Northants, became Conservative-controlled (having been a Liberal-supported Labour administration). Added to the 35 councils already hung, the total is now 51. At Annual Meetings, mostly last week, Conservatives took control in 20 councils, Labour in 11 and the Liberal/SDP Alliance in 10.
'Support' on hung councils can be either positive, i.e. voting for another party, or more usually negative, i.e. abstaining on the crucial votes. In some cases *both* 'opposition' parties abstain, people are ill or hide in loos (as in Bristol, see last week's *NS*), in which case an unsupported or 'minority' administration takes over. Glos was meeting as we went to press.

Peace Protests Roll Call (15)

Total arrested to date in UK and Eire: 7,139

Arrests to date by location

Molesworth USAF Base, Huntingdon **112**
112 arrests over Easter. 81 protestors mainly charged with obstruction and cri. damage. 31 released without charge. There have been 356 arrests at Molesworth since Nov. '84.

Alconbury USAF Base, Huntingdonshire **17**
21.4.85. 22 people from Cambridge, Colchester and Sutton entered the base. One group walked along the runway for a mile to within 300 yards of a group of Canberra aircraft where they set up a peace camp using polythene and bean poles. 9 people ran towards the aircraft disregarding a British guard who shouted 'Stop or I'll shoot!'. Those remaining at the 'peace camp' were arrested but the other 9 climbed onto the wing of one of the planes and remained there for 25 minutes singing peace songs before descending voluntarily. Other groups walked round the base for 90 minutes rearranging signs and painting buildings and vehicles. 4 people gave themselves up and were thrown to the ground and handcuffed by US servicemen. Another group walked out unchallenged through the main gate! There was only one MoD plod on duty — MoD and CID reinforcements had to be brought in from Molesworth to process those arrested. The 17 detained were held for 7 hours in freezing conditions. All released except for one woman from Colchester who was held for allegedly breaking bail conditions. She was sent to Holloway for 7 days.
Another group cut 50 feet of fence during a separate action on the same night.
29 April at 3am. 9 people entered the base at three different points. These actions were carried out to express solidarity with the Alconbury 9 whose trial on conspiracy charges begins on 10 June at Northampton Cr. Court.
At 4.30 am 4 were arrested on the runway and another 3 arrested near the residential area by US soldiers wearing hip pistols and carrying automatic rifles. The 4 on the runway were forced to lie face down and were searched at gunpoint. One of the protestors told soldiers 'this isn't Vietnam'. Landing lights & military signs were defaced and the runway painted with flowers and signs denouncing genocide. Leaflets were distributed and seeds planted. The 7 arrested were held for 11 hours and eventually released — 5 without charge 'pending further enquiries re. cr. damage to fence'. Helen Trask and Jean Hutchinson were charged with cri. damage to the Americans' perimeter fence. **7**

Brighton Metropole Hotel 'Arms Exhibition' 14-16 May **34**
15.5.85. 32 arrests mainly public order offences. 12 people chained themselves to hotel front while wothers distracted the police by blocking main road opposite the hotel. All arrested including legal observer. Later demonstrators on the central reservation were pushed roughly by police into oncoming traffic and slammed into barricades. Delegates attending the exhibition were unwilling to say which firms they represented — denied that weapons of internal repression were on display inside.
16.5.85. Demonstrators o/side Metropole moved by Sussex police to other dise of road. 2 further arrests (apparently for not walking away quickly enough). Across the road demonstrators lined by police for 30 mins or so until an inspector decided he'd had enough of policing political protests and bellowed at everyone to DISPERSE' else they'd be arrested.

Royal Observer Corps, Arundel **3**
March '84. 3 CND demonstrators arrested after refusing to get off the hatch leading to underground chamber of ROC monitoring post at Ford Airfield. All 3 agreed to be bound over to keep the peace for a year in the sum of £100 at Arundel magistrates in May. One defendant, Barry Waddington, remarked: 'The whole ethos of our movement is to keep the peace. I just wish it was possible to bind over all Western leaders in the same way'.

Please send new information to Janey Hulme *at the* New Statesman.

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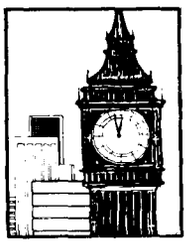

PETER KELLNER

Dear councillor, sod the jobless, yours Maggie

THIS IS the story of an attempt to bring down unemployment — and how it failed. The numbers involved are not large: 1,772, to be precise. But the principles in this case have far wider application. The story provides an instructive lesson in the government's lack of compassion, strategy and imagination.

Last autumn, Durham County Council launched a 'Campaign for the creation of real jobs'. Campaign is the council's word, not mine. Its exercise was not to push out large quantities of unread propaganda but to see what the council itself could do to help. It decided to work out how many more people the council could employ without adding to the burden of the public sector. It then told Mrs Thatcher what it found. As we shall see, her response left much to be desired.

Durham's starting point was the cost of unemployment. This is not easy to calculate precisely. The easy bit is what the government spends in unemployment benefit. But to this must be added: other social security benefits, including rent and rate rebates; the loss of income tax and national insurance receipts to the government from people who would otherwise be in work; and indirect taxes and duties that arise from what people spend. Three years ago the House of Lords select committee on employment estimated the total cost to be at least £5,000 per person on average; or almost £6,000 at today's prices. Other studies have put the cost at between £5,600 and £7,300 per person.

The question Mick Terrans, leader of Durham County Council, sought to answer was this: how many extra people could the council employ — in 'real jobs' — at a cost of £5,000 per job, if the government would agree to put up the money instead of wasting the same amount on financing unemployment?

Each of Durham's chief officers was consulted. The costs had to include the employers' national insurance costs, and the jobs had to be ones that needed doing — jobs that in a less restrictive atmosphere for local government spending would probably be done anyway. Back came the replies. The architect's and building departments could not find any jobs, but each of the other 11 could: manual workers in the fire service at £4,615 a year, personal aides in homes for the elderly at £4,691 a year, and 40 jobs in road maintenance within the £5,000 limit. Altogether, the chief officers said they could employ an extra 1,320 people within the guidelines which had been laid down. The five district councils and two health authorities in the county were then asked the same question; they managed to come up with a further 452 jobs.

Last November, Peter Dawson, Durham's chief executive, and Giles Radice, a local Labour MP, wrote to the Prime Minister to suggest that, as an experiment, the government agree to finance the recruitment of these 1,772 people. On Christmas Eve Mrs Thatcher replied:

> I am afraid that I do not accept that the 'cost of unemployment is the figure of £5,000 per person per annum estimated by the House of Lords select committee ... If the cost of benefits alone is taken into consideration, the average cost per unemployed person is estimated at £1,950 in 1984/5. When this is compared to the cost of employing a person in public authority at £5,000 per annum, paying tax and national insurance contributions of between £1,300 and £1,650, it is clear that there is a shortfall of £1,400 to £1,800 between savings to the Exchequer and the employment costs.

In one sense Mrs Thatcher had a point: the House of Lords calculation concerned the costs of unemployed set against the taxes paid by workers earning average amounts of pay; clearly workers doing low-paid jobs, such as those listed by Durham County Council, would contribute less to the Exchequer. Yet Thatcher's own sums were also wrong, for she omitted two sets of indirect costs: benefits such as rent and rate rebates, and the foregone revenue from VAT and duties when people are on the dole.

Mrs Thatcher made a second point to dismiss Durham's ideas:

> It is also important to remember that, of the new jobs currently being created, many are being filled by people who are not actually receiving unemployment benefit — for example, some married women. Given the relatively low annual earnings levels proposed in the Council's scheme, and the concentration of the jobs in education and social services departments, I imagine that a higher than average proportion could be taken by women in this category, perhaps on a part-time basis.

Only a Prime Minister who knows so little about employment conditions in the North could write such self-confident, heartless nonsense.

In the circumstances, I am surprised by the moderation of Mick Terrans's response, in early February. He concluded that his scheme 'might not be without some teething problems': hence his suggestion that it be tried as an experiment. If the government were to pay the council £5,000 a year for each unemployed person taken into employment,

> we will, for our part, keep a quite separate account of the sums received and paid out in respect of those additionally employed. We will seek to ensure that those we employ under this scheme would otherwise be receiving unemployment or supplementary benefits ..
>
> Toward the end of the [1985/86] financial year, we could sit down together and look at the number and kinds of people we had been able to employ and to confirm that overall public expenditure had not grown.

AT THE END of last month, Mrs Thatcher's private secretary replied. This time he found new excuses. Instead of arguing about the costs of unemployment as the previous letter from Downing Street had done, he dismissed them as irrelevant. Factors that would bring down unemployment, he wrote,

> could include falling wages, reduced labour supply, reduced taxation, improvements in the quality of British goods, or any one or combination of these and many other possible changes.

What relevance, you might ask, had this (even if true) to the Durham proposal?

> Employment measures of the sort which you propose would hamper the adjustments in the labour market that are necessary if unemployment is to be reduced ... Subsidies for jobs which should be filled, if at all, through the proper working of the labour market will tend to reduce pressure for sensible and realistic adjustment.

There is something so surreal about that reply as to beggar the imagination. 'Adjustments in the labour market' means pay cuts; yet the jobs involved would all pay less than £100 a week — so little that Mrs Thatcher, in her earlier letter, thought they would be filled largely by women working part-time. It is, apparently, the government's official view that to pay 1,772 more people in County Durham an average of £90 a week to do jobs that ought to be done anyway at little or no net cost to the public purse would not only be 'subsidy', but would fuel wage inflation by preventing 'the proper working of the labour market'.

Maybe Mrs Thatcher thinks manual workers in Durham doing road maintenance or providing full-time help in homes for the elderly should be paid £60 or £70 a week. Or would she regard even that as a 'subsidy' because it is a public sector job, rather than one created by private enterprise? Certainly the evidence of this correspondence is that she has no sympathy for people without work. It is not, I grant, the first time that point has been made; but it is, I reckon, one of the more telling demonstrations of that scandalous fact. □

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HANDOUTS UNDER THE COUNTER

Behind the official rhetoric on public spending and the free market, legal restrictions are systematically bent to allow large grants to private companies. John Rentoul reports

GOVERNMENT GRANTS to industry are paid out without proper scrutiny and without observing usual civil service rules, according to information obtained by the *New Statesman*. Our investigations have built up a disturbing picture of the secret working of the Industrial Development Unit of the Department of Trade and Industry.

- All the executive officials of the unit are seconded from the private sector. Most of them now come from banks and accountancy firms whose clients include major grant recipients. Until recently some of them actually came from the companies that receive the largest grants.
- Some large 'customers' can virtually dictate the procedure by which their grants are made: on one occasion electronics company STC insisted on and got the exclusion of trade unionist members from a meeting of the board that supervises the unit's work.
- The unit uses unorthodox filing systems, including the use of files which are not 'registered', which conceal aspects of its work from Whitehall's own auditors, the National Audit Office.

The IDU decides on 'selective' grants, known as 'section 7 and section 8 money'. These grants are discretionary under the Industrial Development Act (see box 1). Last year £189 million was given away at the IDU's discretion.

The IDU is not like other Whitehall offices. It is dominated by non-civil servants. Although its Director is a civil servant, of the second highest Whitehall grade (Deputy Secretary), it is the five Deputy Directors, all on two-year secondments from the private sector, who wield real power and are in charge of the actual 'appraisal' of projects seeking aid. They are given Under-Secretary status, the third highest civil service grade, which carries a salary of £29,500. Below them are 'case officers', also on secondment, at Principal level (salary of up to £17,500), who deal with individual grant applications.

The row over Peter Levene's appointment as chief arms buyer for the Ministry of Defence has recently exposed the sorts of potential conflicts of interest that plague such appointments. Levene is not allowed to see papers referring to any of the companies with which he was connected. The Industrial Development Unit has similar internal rules, and secondees are bound by the Official Secrets Act not to disclose anything to their employers which they have learnt in the department, but in practice this is difficult to enforce. The Official Secrets Act, reinforced by 'commercial confidentiality', also binds the IDU not to reveal any information to the public.

THE IDU'S FILES aren't like the rest of the civil service either. Standard civil service practice is to divide all files in two (loose minutes and notes on the left and official documents on the right), and to number all documents consecutively.

IDU files lump all papers together, unnumbered, in date order. When the National Audit Office (the body that reports on all government spending to parliament), carries out its annual audit, its officials have no way of knowing if papers have been removed from files.

The National Audit Office is expected to carry out a full 'value for money' investigation of section 8 grants later this year. A preliminary examination has already been carried out, and a spokesperson for the Office confirmed that IDU files do contain 'unnumbered enclosures'. The significance of this, and the fact that the IDU is known to have a 'large number of unregistered files' will be 'taken into account at the full investigation stage'. Unofficially, it is understood that the NAO is likely to be unhappy at the state of the IDU's files, but publicly all the Office is prepared to say is that 'some departments are probably not as well organised as they should be'.

At one stage the IDU went as far as having a special and quite irregular stamp, 'Not for E & AD Eyes', on minutes exchanged with other divisions in the department. The E & AD (Exchequer and Audit Department) became the National Audit Office last year.

The only public information the IDU discloses about its discretionary grants is published in *British business*, the Department of Trade and Industry magazine. This consists of a list of grants, the name of the company (but not the parent company), the 'scheme' under which the grant was made, and the area in which the project is situated.

The figures can be published up to two years after the grant has been arranged, and even this degree of public accountability was only introduced by Tony Benn as Industry Minister (1974-76), against the advice of his civil servants.

One example of how much this information

1: The Industrial Development Act

DESPITE ITS RHETORIC about the benefits of the free market, the government gives away £1,000 million a year to industry in grants. About half is paid in the form of Regional Development Grant, which is claimed and paid automatically to companies in 'Assisted Areas' for new premises and machinery. This is being cut back and the emphasis is switching to 'selective' aid granted by the Department of Trade and Industry, under the Industrial Development Act 1982 and the Science and Technology Act 1965.

Selective industrial development grants are not decided by civil servants, but by bankers and accountants on secondment to the department's Industrial Development Unit (IDU).

These selective grants are of two main kinds: section 7 and section 8. These sections of the Heath government's Industry Act 1972 have survived amending and consolidating Acts, and are now part of the 1982 Act. Section 7 allows for discretionary grants to companies in Assisted Areas if they are considered to be *creating* or *preserving* jobs (the 'automatic' Regional Development Grants as paid on plant and buildings regardless of jobs). Similar powers existed in the 1960s under the Local Employment Acts.

But section 8 is not directly concerned with jobs, and it is this power which, according to the evidence collected by the *New Statesman*, is most abused. Section 8 conferred a new power on the DTI to assist major projects wherever they were (not just in the Assisted Areas), and regardless of whether they created jobs or not. It was specifically to help industry 'modernise' in preparation for joining the Common Market. Unemployment had just fallen to 825,000.

Section 8 was conceived of as a special and occasional power. The government's White Paper in 1972 said:

> On occasion, particularly in view of our entry into Europe, it may be necessary to consider the wider structure of an industry or a major project beyond the boundaries of the Assisted Areas. The government will seek new powers also to provide selective assistance more widely in such cases. This is not intended in any way to replace existing private sources of industrial finance.

This last point was central to section 8: it was not intended *'in any way'* to provide a cash bonus for projects which companies were going ahead with anyway. The strict rules on 'additionality' continued to be stressed by Industry Minister Norman Lamont when he announced the new emphasis on job creation and selective grants last November. Selective assistance was, he said, 'available for projects which protect existing employment *but which would otherwise not go ahead*'.

Section 8 of the Bill was attacked in the Commons in 1972 for its lack of parliamentary accountability, and the government amended it at the very last minute to include a requirement that grants under section 8 of more than £5 million (later raised to £10 million) be authorised by a resolution in the House of Commons.

Although this threshold has very rarely been reached, £106 million was given away under section 8 in 1983/84, far more than under section 7. Not only are these grants not directly accountable to parliament, the evidence obtained by the *New Statesman* suggests that indirect routes of accountability are bypassed too. ●

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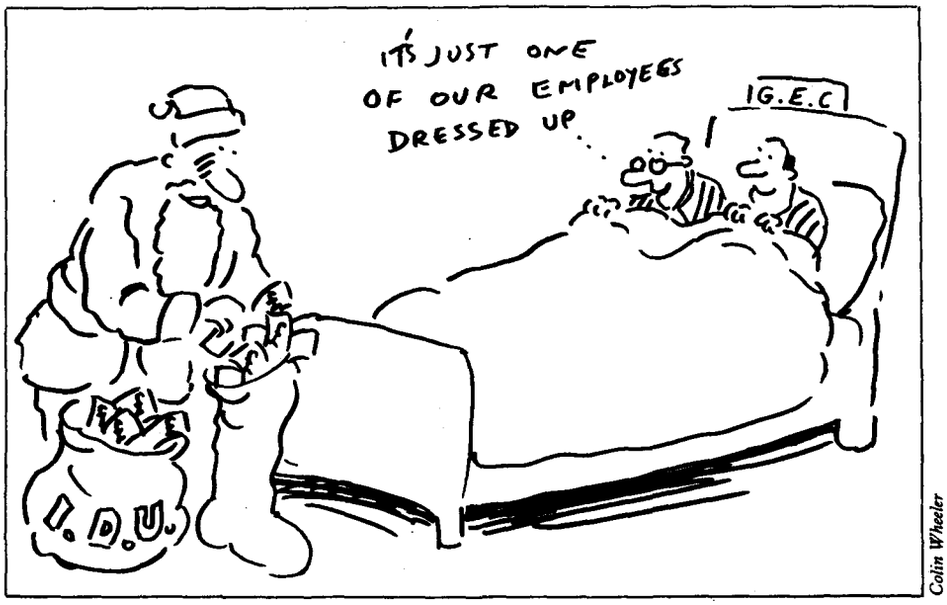

Colin Wheeler

can conceal was an application by Ford for assistance for renewing its Transit van production line at Dagenham. Simply replacing old plant with new is not eligible for grants. But because the company was changing from oil-fired boilers at the same time, the project was assisted under the 'coal-firing scheme', designed to encourage conversion of boilers to coal-burning. Ten per cent of the cost of the whole project — the usual maximum — was granted, although assistance should only have been given for the boilers themselves. Last year the payment of £3.5 million was recorded in *British business*. A Ford press officer, after complaining that answering the *New Statesman*'s questions 'won't help us sell another car', claimed that the 'coal-fired facility', consisting of four boilers for the Dagenham plant, cost £20 million, and that the grant was towards that cost. Even if the boilers did cost £20 million, Ford would not have been entitled in normal circumstances to more than £2 million.

The STC case

THE STC FIBRE OPTICS project is a classic example of the way the IDU operates. In late 1982, STC* applied to the IDU for section 8 aid for a £50 million programme of investment in fibre optics and cables for export. A Memorandum of Understanding (see box 2) was drawn up, but the request caused a row when it was considered by the Industrial Development Board in May 1983. The two trade unionists on the board, Gavin Laird and Eric Hammond, had not received the STC papers in advance, and Laird was asked to leave the meeting when the item came up (Hammond wasn't there).

It is normal practice for IDAB members with an interest in an application (which happens often enough) to leave the room while it is being discussed, but as a trade union leader Laird would not be considered to have a conflict of interest simply because he had members working for a particular company. He would be unable to use any of the information gained at IDAB because he was bound by the Official Secrets Act.

The then chairman of IDAB, the late Bill Mackworth-Young (chairman of merchant bankers Morgan Grenfell), demanded to know why Laird was being excluded from the meeting. The Deputy Director concerned, John Buddle (a secondee from Lloyds Bank), explained that STC had insisted that neither of the trade unionists be present because of the 'sensitivity' of its profit forecasts. Laird is understood to have been furious, saying: 'If this happens again, I'm not having anything more to do with IDAB.' Nevertheless, he duly left the meeting while the STC application, the last item on the agenda, was approved.

The minutes record only that 'Mr G. Laird left the meeting', with no explanation.

Laird refuses to comment on specific cases, although he admitted 'the guidelines left a lot to be desired'. He will not comment either on his reasons for resigning from IDAB seven months later, in December 1983.

Since then, STC has been paid £800,000 under its Memorandum, the payments being published in *British business* under the 'fibre optics scheme'.

Yet, at the time of the STC affair, and until late last year, an STC employee, John Allen, was one of the Deputy Directors of the IDU. While the *New Statesman* accepts that he did not use his influence with Jack Gill, the then Director, to secure the exclusion of Laird and Hammond from the meeting, this is a very dangerous precedent. STC has received £6.5 million of selective assistance through IDU in the last three years.

THE DANGER OF CONFLICTS of interest in such situations was belatedly recognised in the latest reshuffle last year. All secondees are now from banks and accountancy firms only, rather than from IDU 'customers' direct. STC's John Allen and Howard Middleton of ICI, recipient of at least £4.5 million over the last three years, both ended their secondments. ▷

*STC was until October 1982 a subsidiary of ITT, the US-based telecommunications corporation. In 1983 STC made £92 million profit, up 43 per cent on the year before. This figure included total grants of at least £1.2 million, although this fact does not have to be disclosed in the accounts.

2: Memoranda of Understanding

IN AUGUST 1982, the Department of Trade and Industry changed its policy on assistance to big corporations. Rather than assessing the concept of 'additionality' on each grant (making sure the grant won't simply be replacing money the company would have spent anyway, a notoriously difficult thing to do), the IDU negotiated confidential 'Memoranda of Understanding' to cover whole series of grants.

The change came about because some companies, in particular textiles giant Courtaulds, were making a large number of very similar applications. The IDU's rules prevented it funding a single large application because it can't make payments until a company has started spending on a project which has already been checked.

Memoranda of Understanding commit the Department of Trade and Industry to assist future spending on a whole 'programme' of projects, which meets the 'additionality' criterion *when taken as a whole*. This allows through individual projects which might otherwise be difficult to assess.

Applications submitted under a Memorandum are paid without the usual appraisal; they go only to a 'sponsor' division of the Department, which is generally understaffed and unqualified to assess their commercial credibility. The IDU's only role is to issue offer letters based on a standard draft.

Memoranda of Understanding have been negotiated with some of the biggest grant recipients, including GEC, STC and Courtaulds. Typically they cover a programme costing as much as £50 million over five years, and promise to fund 10 per cent of the total cost. ●

3: The Industrial Development Advisory Board

The members of IDAB are (*figures in brackets are total selective grants made to each company in the last three years*):

Chair: Ronald Halstead, managing director of drugs manufacturer Beecham

Stanley Thompson, finance director of Ford UK (£5 million)

Eric Swainson, managing director of diversified metals company IMI (£718,000)

Tom Allen, partner in accountants Peat Marwick, auditors of IMI and Vickers (£2.5 million)

Dr Adolf Frankel, chairperson of mechanical engineers Wellman (£89,000), and formerly of Staveley Industries

Eric Hammond, general secretary, Electricians' Union

New members appointed in March 1985:

Harold Mourgue, finance director of Thorn EMI (£923,000)

Peter Grant, deputy chairperson of Lazards merchant bank, advisers to GEC (£9.8 million), Vickers and Unilever (£2 million)

John Melbourn, Nat West international banking division

Alan Wheatley, partner in accountants Price Waterhouse, auditors of ICI (£4.5 million), Courtaulds (£3.9 million) and Unilever

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4. The Select Few

The main beneficiaries of selective grants are big, profitable companies. Top of the list is GEC, notorious for its £1 billion 'cash mountain', which got £10 million over the last three years. Over the same period it cut its UK workforce by 24,000.

	£ million
GEC	9.8
Ferranti	7.7
STC	6.5
Lucas	5.9
Plessey	5.5
BICC	5.4
Ford	4.9
Metal Box	4.7
ICI	4.5
Trafalgar House	4.5
Courtaulds	3.9
Vickers	2.5
Unilever	2.1
Philips	1.9
Midland Bank	1.2

Table shows: some recipients of discretionary grants under sections 7 and 8 of the Industrial Development Act over three years, 4th quarter 1981 to 3rd quarter 1984; totals of identified grants to companies and their subsidiaries; includes selective assistance in Northern Ireland.

The new Deputy Directors are from two high street banks (Midland and Barclays), two accountancy firms (Deloittes and Pannell Kerr Forster) and one merchant bank (Hill Samuel). The number of the second-tier secondees, the case officers, has recently been cut from 14 to 5, and these come from Midland and Nat West banks and three medium-sized firms of accountants, Dearden Farrow, Armitage and Norton, and Thornton Baker.

Although banks and accountants primarily act as 'brokers' for industrial companies wanting grants, Midland Bank has obtained some section 7 grants on its own account, for example, £1 million in 1982 for its computer complex in Barnsley, and £200,000 last year for transferring jobs from London to Bury.

Deloittes audits Plessey, which received £5.5 million in selective grants over the past three years, and Thornton Baker audits Ferranti, recipient of at least £7.7 million. Merchant bank Hill Samuel acts as financial adviser to several large claimants: GEC (£9.8 million over the last three years), Courtaulds (£3.9 million), Massey-Ferguson (£1 million) and IMI (£718,000).

The same trend away from industrialists and in favour of their financial advisers is evident in recent (March 1985) changes on the Industrial Development Advisory Board (IDAB), although it is now chaired by Ronald Halstead, managing director of drugs manufacturer Beecham and, ironically, a trustee of the free-market Institute for Economic Affairs (box 3).

THE OBJECTION to discretionary grants is not, of course, to the principle of public assistance for innovation and exports, but to the close relationship between those giving and receiving public money, and the secrecy surrounding this relationship.

While many IDU-backed projects are socially and economically beneficial, there's no guarantee that they won't lead to net job losses or wage reductions. In the case of Brown and Sharpe (*New Statesman* 4 December 1981), the company got a £3.4 million grant to transfer its factory from East London to Plymouth, with a loss to Britain of 90 jobs. The IDU is also vulnerable to threats by companies to take their projects abroad.

The Greater London Enterprise Board shows a different way in which a discretionary grant system could work, using social need as a criterion. The recent case of a GLEB investment officer dismissed for allegedly accepting a £45,000 bribe suggests that any grants system is vulnerable to corruption. But GLEB is, above all, accountable to an elected GLC for its investments. □

STAR WARS

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POLITICS:SCOTLAND

STOPPING THE FLIGHT TO THE RIGHT

Rob Edwards reports on moves to steady the Left

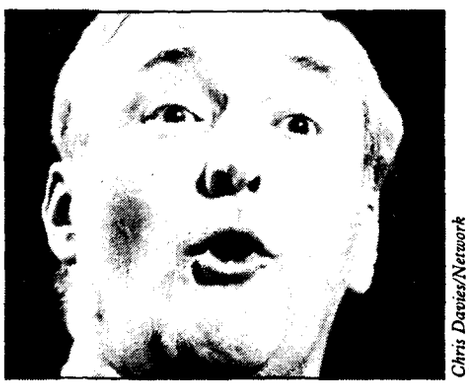
THE 'REALIGNMENT' of the Left has been a popular talking point in the last six months. As various left luminaries have competed for space to argue their latest strategies for socialism in *New Statesman, Guardian* and elsewhere, the debate in the media has tended to focus on individuals and their changing allegiances: Tom Sawyer, Michael Meacher and David Blunkett versus Dennis Skinner and Tony Benn on the National Executive Committee (NEC), and Ken Livingstone versus John McDonnell and Ted Knight on London Labour Briefing. Precious little has been said about how the Labour Left is — or should be — organised.

But now a group of influential left-wingers, many active in Scotland's Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) is planning a major new initiative to give an organisational focus to the realigned forces. The LCC nationally is the main broad left lobby group in the Labour Party for trade union and constituency activists. The aim is to recapture the LCC, some of whose executive is considered to have drifted too far to the right, for the kind of 'serious left' position outlined by Peter Hain, its vice-chairperson, in last week's *New Statesman.*

It is hoped that this might stop the LCC from becoming 'some kind of latter-day Fabian Society' and lead instead to its reinvigoration as an active and effective internal party pressure group. An alternative option of setting up a completely new organisation was considered, but was rejected as impracticable.

The plan is to draw up a slate for the elections to the LCC executive in November. Soundings have already been taken amongst a range of key activists throughout the country, including MPs and members of the NEC, and are said to have revealed 'a very strong basis of support'. In the long run it is hoped — perhaps rather optimistically — to attract support from important figures like Tony Benn and Robin Cook from very different parts of the old hard-soft left spectrum. Those involved are thinking of publically launching the new initiative within a couple of months and do not wish to identify themselves until plans are further advanced.

Behind the scenes discussions on precisely the kind of policy and strategy objectives that



Chris Davies/Network

Will you, Tony Benn, alias Hard...

could form the basis for the new grouping are still taking place, but the central tenets are likely to include:

- recognition of the need to return a Labour government led by Neil Kinnock at the next general election;
- acceptance of a class analysis of society which recognises that the working class has a leading role to play in achieving socialism;
- support for a left-wing Alternative Economic Strategy including public ownership, compulsory planning agreements, selective import controls and opposition to wage restraint;
- agreement on the urgent need to bring the fight against racism and sexism into the mainstream of labour movement campaigns;
- no accommodation with Militant or any other sectarian groups.

During last year, the LCC executive clearly broke with the 'ultra-left'. But there is a growing anxiety within Labour's Left that the LCC has over-reacted. 'They are throwing babies out with the bathwater' said one of those behind the new initiative. 'We don't want the LCC to become simply some kind of fan club for whoever happens to be leader of the Labour Party. But on the other hand we don't want to join those who sit around gleefully awaiting the next leadership sell-out'. 'We want a group that can genuinely influence Kinnock in a way that the Left does not appear to be able to do so at the moment as it keeps on scoring own goals' said another. 'We want to put Kinnock in a position where he can support agreed party policy

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City Syndication

take you, Robin Cook, AKA Soft?

against the attack of both the Right and the ultra-left.'

Much of the impetus behind the new initiative comes from members of the Scottish LCC, which seems to have organised more effectively than its largely London-orientated counterpart in recent years. As part of a broad left alliance, it has won a controlling influence on the Scottish executive, but has never worked with any of the ultra-left groups. Indeed it has been to the fore in criticising manifestations of sectarianism where ever they appear, as was illustrated at this year's Scottish party conference.

More recently it was LCC activists on the Scottish executive who started the process which ended up with the Labour Party in Scotland formally disassociating itself from the controversial Militant-inspired youth demonstrations in Glasgow. The LCC in Scotland, in other words, argues that it has always been where Sawyer, Blunkett, Meacher, Livingstone et al have lately arrived.

Of course the political context in Scotland, where there is a clear majority of Labour MPs (41 of a total of 72) and a well-organised Labour movement, is entirely different. It is in effect a four-party system is which Labour can never forget the threat presented by the Scottish National Party (SNP). The Left within the SNP has become dominant in recent years, so that there is now little to choose between the party's major social and economic policies and those of the Labour Party. To the uninitiated, it might thus seem that there were real opportunities for alliances, electoral or otherwise, between the SNP and Labour Left. In reality however the two sides are divided by a bitterness that is sometimes hard to credit.

THE MAIN problem is the SNP's *raison dêtre*, Scottish independence, to which Labour is strongly opposed. This fundamental policy difference is accentuated by acute personality conflicts which take on an enhanced importance within Scotland's relatively small political community. There are also difficulties over the SNP's advocacy of an elected constitutional convention to determine how Scotland should be governed if Labour lose the next election (and hence are not able to deliver devolution). This year's battles between local and central government are still far from over in Scotland, with the continuing resistance being put up by Labour-controlled Edinburgh's Labour group, when it faces court action, will not fission as explosively as Labour councillors on the Greater London Council did.

One of the more bizarre suggestions on the local government scene is the widely publicised notion that the Left in Glasgow District is regrouping under the leadership of Councillor Pat Lally, who is standing against long-time group leader Jean McFadden in this week's group elections. This version of events, which seems to bear little relation to reality, has been most enthusiastically promoted by Lally himself. □

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□Mr Mills, who had worked at Longbridge for 13 years was dismissed last year when he hit a foreman he claimed had called him 'a black bastard'. But in a written, reserved decision the three-man tribunal said it was no different to saying someone was Scottish, Welsh or Asian and illegitimate. In its experience, such expressions were common on the shop floor of factories 'but are not intended there should be a racial meaning.' — *Daily Telegraph* (Michael Wrigley)

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POLITICS: WALES

PARTIES SNARL AS WALES DIES

Tony Heath reports on the new friends and old enemies after the miners' strike

THE YEAR of the miners' strike sets the agenda for any discussion about the shifting landscape of the Left in Wales. The impact of the dispute was so profound that it will remain the case for years to come.

Bearing in mind the solidarity of the South Wales coalfield, barely dented by 12 months' privation, that should surprise no one. And alongside such a demonstration of principle, talk of possible electoral pacts between Labour and Plaid Cymru (the Welsh nationalists) or temporary accommodations with faceless independents in council chambers look more than usually suspect.

What is beginning to excite interest is the possibility of strengthening the communal determination which kept the valleys solid. The other side of the coin is the threat to unity implicit in the activities of seekers after sectarian advantage.

A new line-up of radical forces bridging party differences is an elusive prize, but one worth fighting for. The Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities, formed last year with a breadth of support which makes broad churches look like thin chapels is a potential winner. Labour, Communist, Plaid Cymru, cultural bodies like the Welsh Language Society, church leaders, chapel elders, farmers — the list of congress supporters is impressive. It is fully backed by the Wales TUC, scores of support groups from all over Britain — and CGT shop stewards from the Renault car factory in Rouen.

When the lodges marched back behind their banners on 5 March unity was in full flower. Despite strains it is still intact. If the tensions being generated in the hunt for party advantage damage that unity the perpetrators will end up in the political wilderness.

For in the coalfield, away from the hothouse of London — and its outstation, Cardiff — the desire to stay together runs deep. It comes through strongly in the women's support groups, and the remembered experience of how Belgian communists, London gays and NUPE shop stewards from the Midlands came together to help Welsh coal miners' families.

Before the strike co-operation of that sort would have been unthinkable. It became commonplace — and it should inform party politicians that co-operation in the face of Thatcherism is more important than individual ambition.

BUT MEMORIES are short, habit strong. Ray Powell, a Welsh Labour MP who rallied to the miners rather more strongly than some of his colleagues, believes that the Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities has outlived its usefulness. 'It should be buried now', he says.

Plaid Cymru's theoretical magazine *Radical Wales* has launched a sectarian barrage against the Labour Party, and a slogan 'Labour let the miners down' is forming on nationalist lips.

It is true that many Labour MPs sat on the fence — so much so that one delegate at this year's Welsh Labour Party conference was moved to remark that the strike kept the NHS busy removing splinters from Westminster bottoms.

Others like Ann Clwyd, the Member for the Cynon Valley and treasurer of the Wales Congress, were on the picket line as well as the rally platform. At grassroots Labour worked more effectively than the nationalists, whose strength lies in the rural north and west where branches 300 strong could barely muster half-a-dozen supporters for the cause. The Plaid leadership promised support and the party's president Dafydd Elis Thomas MP, who describes himself as a Marxist, came through strongly — sometimes getting slagged by his conservative wing in the process.

With Labour rising in the polls Neil Kinnock can look forward to reinforcements for the 20 Welsh Labour MPs returned in 1983, when the Tories won 14 seats in the Principality and the Liberals and Plaid Cymru two apiece. In 1966 Labour won 32 seats, the Tories three and the Liberals one.

Electoral considerations should not divert attention from the main issue in Wales — the rundown of the economy in general and the mining industry in particular. Predictions coming out of Brussels and Westminster indicate that of all Britain's peripheral conflicts Wales and Scotland are due for the bloodiest butchery. Kim Howells, the South Wales NUM's research officer, estimates that within a decade the valleys will be down to six or seven pits with another 10,000 miners on the dole.

Should that happen Wales will be reduced to a silicon strip along the M4 in the south, Europe's first Taiwan, and a Costa Geriatrica in the north inhabited by retired folk. The huge middle slice is being prepared for duty as a holiday playground. Museum attendants will be in demand to care for the industrial relics picked in sentimental aspic for the benefit of the tourist trade, an industry reckoned by Nicholas Edwards, the lugubrious Welsh Secretary, to have great growth potential.

Such a dismal prospect need not become reality if, as Hywel Francis, who chairs the Wales Congress, believes, the Left stays united. The Communist Party in Wales, of which Francis is a leading member, is assuming the role of conciliator in the Labour v Plaid Cymru fracas and calls for the broadest possible alliance — even the Liberal Party is mentioned as a possible addition to the Wales Congress — to oppose Thatcher.

The direction of two leading trade union bosses who recently retired to Wales offers some evidence of how things could develop. Alan Fisher, the former general secretary of the National Union of Public Employees, is helping to revitalise a moribund Labour party in a seat held by the nationalists. Bernard Dix, a one-time member of Labour's national executive and NUPE assistant general secretary, has joined Plaid Cymru in a Labour area.

Theirs is not the only path to have diverged. But if Wales — and the rest of Britain — is to weather the storm until Mrs Thatcher goes to the country the unity demonstrated by the Wales Congress must be built on. The miners' families of Maerdy and Maesteg have earned something better than a return to pre-strike politicking. □

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WAGES COUNCILS

LET THEM EARN PEANUTS

Vital protection — or union neglect: Jolyon Jenkins reports

THE LEFT reacted angrily to the government's proposal to abolish the wages councils. 'A sweatshop charter' the *Morning Star* called it; the shopworkers' union USDAW said that it would pave the way for a return of 'a Dickensian world'.

The vehemence of the protests is a mark of how six years of Thatcherism have redrawn the map of wages negotiations. Then years ago few socialists would have thought the wages councils worth fighting over. They were anachronisms, with funny titles like 'Hair, Bass and Fibre' or 'Ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower'. The wages they set were, for the most part, way below the going rate workers were receiving. With the growth in size and power of the trade union movement they were becoming obsolete and were disappearing fast. The last Labour government abolished ten of them. If they weren't a great positive force for good, the theory went, they were quaint rather than dangerous.

But the structure of the councils was unlikely to endear them to the new free-market Tories. Equal numbers of employers' and workers' representatives, three independent government appointed members, setting legally enforceable rates for 2.75 million workers — they were altogether too corporatist and cosy, and introduced 'dysfunctions' and 'rigidities' into the labour market. And (in contradiction) ministers were particularly annoyed when in 1983 two wages councils set pay increases that exceeded government pay targets.

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Over the past three or four years the campaign to abolish the councils has gathered pace. Anecdotal examples have appeared in the press of small firms who have had to sack workers because they couldn't afford to pay them the legal minimum — even when the workers themselves were apparently prepared to work for less. It has been argued that the rates set for young people discourage employees from taking them on: the rates for school leavers are now 62 per cent of those for adults whereas in 1945 they were 38 per cent.

In December the Institute of Directors launched an abolition campaign, claiming that 54 per cent of its members would employ more people if the councils went. The CBI has been more cautious, proposing reform rather than abolition, recognising that many employers prefer negotiations through wage concils to the hurly burly of free collective bargaining.

According to the Low Pay Unit, which vigorously opposes wage council abolition, 8,000 more jobs would be created if the councils were to go. This figure is based on the Treasury's own economic model, which was subsequently doctored to exaggerate the effects of wage cuts (*NS* 11 Jan). It doesn't take into account microeconomic effects such as the power of DHSS officials to coerce people into jobs by threatening to withdraw benefit. But the claim that abolition would have a marked effect on jobs is very shaky, and was rejected even by the Tory-dominated Commons select committee on employment.

IT IS DIFFICULT to take seriously the claim that the wage council rates for young people are excessive. The Clothing Manufacturers' wages council, for example, lays down a weekly minimum wage for 16 year olds of £41.27. After deductions for tax, National Insurance, fares to work and a couple of cups of coffee a day, many young clothing workers are left with about £13 a week. As one union spokesperson put it: 'It's about what Nigel Lawson would spend on one bottle of wine in a medium priced West End restaurant. Just what does the government consider an acceptably low wage?'

Faced with such low wages, it's a measure of the unions' desperation that they feel bound to defend the wages councils. Even so, the general attitude was summed up by one official who told me: 'Wages councils are far from perfect, but they're better than nothing, which is the only alternative on offer at the moment.'

Historically, unions have been far more ambivalent than this. Some have seen wage councils as a positive bar to unionisation. Employers have been able to say to their workers: 'There's no need for a union round here — there's a minimum I have to pay you by law,' and the workers themselves can feel little incentive to join a union. Resentful of what they see as freeloaders, unions have been free to negotiate separate higher rates for their own members. This has been taken to the limit in the hairdressing trade. USDAW, which represents about ten per cent of hairdressers, mainly in the large salons and department stores, has successfully negotiated reasonably good wages and conditions for its members. But it has withdrawn from the hairdressing wages council, leaving no union representation at all for the majority of hairdressers. As a result, hairdressing wages are at rock bottom: a fully trained, skilled hairdresser now gets about £65 a week.

In recent years, unions have publically taken a more philanthropic line, arguing that wages councils do ameliorate the exploitation of workers. This is partly borne out by the experience of industries where the wages council has been abolished — with no great upsurge in union membership. Union organisers have also realised the value, in recruiting terms, of presenting themselves to workers as people who can fight to get the minimum wages enforced.

But the dissident thought that wages councils inhibit unionisation lives on. One organiser told me of his private hope that abolition would help recruitment: 'These people will have to come into the union to be protected.'

Wages council industries are notoriously difficult to unionise. They often have a small number of workers per establishment, a rapid turnover of labour, and a high proportion of part-time staff. But have unions used wage councils to excuse the lack of effort put into recruiting in the 'difficult' areas?

A workforce that is predominately female, often not speaking English and sometimes related to the employer has not been seen as 'promising union material' by unions which — say the critics — have relied on large firms, with routine work patterns, to deliver the bulk of their membership. As Yiannis Gabriel pointed out in his article on the fast food industry (*NS* 12 April), the bulk of workers — classic 'poor union material' — said they would like to join a union. But what union wants to adapt its methods in order to recruit and represent young part-time workers on low wages (and low union subs)?

IT IS THE workers in the wages council industries who most need unions to resist the imposition of poor working conditions, rigid hierarchies, lack of training and capricious management practices that characterise sweatshops. Philip Pearson describes, in *Twilight Robbery*, the situation in one non-unionised Hackney clothing factory. The firedoor was padlocked, piecework rates had been cut, and there were other problems:

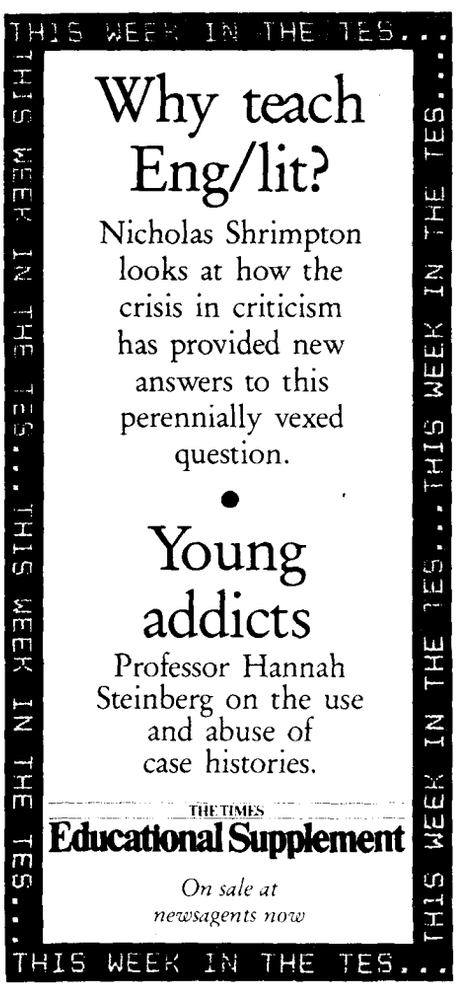
> Part of the work — laying out the cloth on the cardboard pattern — was not timed so it was not paid for at all. Nor were the workers paid for the time spent hanging around at work, waiting for the next job to come in. Not being paid for waiting time is common in places where there is no union. Conversely, employees are expected to work doubly hard when the work does arrive, because as soon as the employers obtain an order they want to push it through in the shortest possible time ... This is the whole key to 'sweating' at work.

An attempt by the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers (NUTGW) to unionise the factory in question failed. The NUTGW is one union that has begun to make more strenuous efforts to organise in the sweatshops, particularly in London's East End; even so, one organiser admitted: 'there are very few success stories'. The union has also been rethinking its recruitment methods and has appointed a Cypriot worker who recruits outside working hours in places like community centres. The union is now looking for a Punjabi speaker to organise in the West Midlands. But such initiatives are still the exception, and it is arguable that but for wages councils they would have come about sooner.

None of which is to suggest that things will be better if the wages councils go. Given the present state of the economy, reform is a much better option. One criticism often made is that the structure of the councils inhibits genuine negotiation. In particular, the three independent members — usually academics or 'experts' on the industry — effectively have a casting vote, since the other two sides are represented equally. Many unions would like to see the independents removed.

Enforcement, too, needs to be tightened up. The Wages Inspectorate aims to inspect each establishment every ten years, two thirds of the inspections being done by visits and the rest by postal questionnaire. But in practice, some small clothing firms are being inspected only once every 25 years. As a prelude to abolition of the councils, the government has cut the Inspectorate from 160 to 119, which represents about one inspector for every 4,000 establishments.

The proportion of postal 'inspections' has increased. Not surprisingly, these show a greater apparent compliance than do actual visits. In 1983, 37.4 per cent of establishments visited were found to be underpaying, but only two were prosecuted — the rest simply had to pay arrears. Many employers plead confusion and ignorance rather appear excessively complicated. Should the wages councils survive the present administration, their reform will have to be taken seriously. □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SAFETY NET FAILS

Epilim, long regarded as one of the safest drugs in use, is now known to have caused several deaths. Terry O'Halloran looks at why it took so long to establish that it could be harmful — and why it is still being prescribed without the necessary checks being carried out

FOR JOAN and Derek Bye 1 June is a special date, the birthday of their daughter Helenor who died in 1978 in Cardiff University Hospital just before she became 13. This year she would have been 20. Behind Helenor's death stands the story of a drug — Epilim, the brand name in the UK for Sodium Valproate.

In July 1977 Helenor was apparently a healthy happy child popular at home and in school. One month before she had been chosen to present a bouquet of flowers to the Queen on behalf of her Methodist Sunday School. On 13 July she went with her parents to Bridgend General Hospital for a kidney X-ray for suspected cystitis. On the way home she had a severe attack of vomiting, confusion, high temperature and hallucination. Her parents suspected a reaction to the X-ray and insisted on her being taken into Bridgend for observation.

Five days of observation produced no explanation. She was released. Twenty-four hours later she had another attack. Back to hospital for more observation. On the fifth day she had an attack in the ward. The Byes were told that they had a spoiled child. Helenor was sent home again.

The Byes insisted on an EEG — an electroencephalograph which measures electrical impulses in the brain. The first one failed and a second was done. This was September and Helenor had had no problems for a clear eight weeks. The episode appeared to be over. However, acting on the EEG, Dr Trefor Jones diagnosed temporal lobe epilepsy and put Helenor on 800mg per day of Epilim. Epilim, available since 1964, was already a popular if little understood treatment for epilepsy. In the vast majority of cases it was, and is, a very effective treatment.

Helenor, however, reacted badly. She became lethargic and suffered renewed bouts of confusion and hallucination. New problems appeared such as occasional incontinence and increasingly poor co-ordination so that she had difficulty feeding herself and began to lose weight. At one point Helenor was sent home from school vomiting and vomited for two weeks.

Her parents were convinced that the drug was causing the problem. They had also, from the first, rejected the diagnosis of epilepsy. They say that they were given explanations for Helenor's conditions such as 'school-phobia', 'attention-seeking' and 'anorexia'. Mrs Bye told the *New Statesman* that she felt that Helenor was being blamed for her illness and that her own opinions and fears were being ignored.

On 17 April 1978 Helenor Bye was taken into Bridgend again. She was seriously ill. Her parents' pleas for a transfer to Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital or Cardiff University Hospital, where specialist knowledge and treatment were available, were rejected. Helenor Bye was finally transferred to the University Hospital in a coma on Sunday 22 April. It was too late. She died on 27 April.

Ever since then Joan and Derek Bye have campaigned for an investigation into their daughter's death and the possible role of Epilim in it. They reject the finding of the inquest held in May 1980. This found that Helenor died of hyperammonaemia — too much ammonia in the blood. This was said to be caused by a very rare hereditary condition. The Byes say that there is no history of this condition in their families and that no evidence of it was ever sought. They want another inquest arguing that at the time of Helenor's death the potentially lethal effect of Epilim was not widely known.

The Byes readily agree that Epilim properly used and monitored is an effective and valuable treatment for epileptics. For many it is the only treatment that works. The problem, however, is that Epilim was originally regarded as without *any* significant side effects. It has taken many years for the other side of the picture to emerge. That it has is largely due to the Byes' campaign.

The Committee for Safety in Medicines (CSM) estimates that between 1972 and 1983 in the UK 19 deaths occurred among patients on Epilim. The figure is only a rough estimate. It is not proven that all 19 died as a result of Epilim. On the other hand the figure does not include Helenor Bye nor a number of children who are thought by their parents to have died as a result of Epilim.

In 1982 the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) estimated that 43 people world-wide had died from Epilim (23 in the USA). As there are 70,000 Epilim-users in the UK alone, the fatalities are a very small fraction of the users. The deaths are primarily due to liver damage. Precisely why Epilim should cause fatal liver damage in a handful of patients is not known. Deaths have also been induced by hyperammonaemia and pancreatitis. The peculiar feature of many of these deaths is that the process has proved to be irreversible — i.e. withdrawal of Epilim has failed to prevent death. The majority of these deaths occurs among very young children. The AAP found that in the USA the median age was 6 years but 10 of the 23 were less than 2 years old.

THE BYES' CAMPAIGN has not only focussed attention on the dangers of Epilim but also on the inadequacy of the system for monitoring the effects of new drugs. Epilim came out in 1964 but it was not until 1981 that the UK data sheet was altered to warn doctors about fatalities. The CSM which has the job of monitoring adverse reactions relies on the yellow card system, which has several times been criticised for failing to pick up on an adverse drug reactions. The cards are filled in by doctors when they believe that a drug is causing an adverse reaction, but the CSM itself says that only about 10 per cent of adverse reactions are, in fact reported. For Epilim, 694 reports had been made up to 1984.

Some doctors say that 10 per cent is an

Helenor Bye, an apparently healthy child, 10 months before her death

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overestimate. The system depends on harassed and hurried doctors having the time, patience and alertness to notice and report adverse reactions. Yet the CSM will not accept reports from parents or patients, because they are not medically qualified. One does not, however, have to have a medical degree to notice a change in one's own or one's child's health, and the AAP says that parents or patients 'should be instructed' to report reactions.

Perhaps more disturbing is the evidence gathered by the Byes and *Daily Mirror* journalist David Seymour that doctors are still prescribing Epilim without any apparent awareness of its dangers. The Byes have files of letters from parents throughout the UK. According to these letters patients not suffering from epilepsy are being prescribed Epilim; adverse reactions are not being accepted by doctors; necessary tests, particularly of liver function, are not being carried out; and some doctors are still describing Epilim as being free of side-effects.

David Seymour has a dossier based on accounts from 100 people who called or wrote to the *Mirror* following the publication of a report on the dangers of Epilim in April 1983. His dossier tells the same story. One mother claims that her doctor slammed the door in her face when she questioned the use of Epilim. All these reports deny that tests on the liver, which should be done before Epilim is prescribed, were ever carried out. Seymour was taken before the Press Council in 1984 which ruled that his report was unbalanced for failing to point to the benefits of Epilim.

Professor David Coulter of the Department of Pediatrics, University of Texas, is scathing about the UK system for introducing and monitoring drugs. He has closely followed the Byes' story and was one of the first to alert scientific opinion to the dangers of Epilim. Speaking to the *New Statesman* he has said that the 'regulatory processes' in the UK are 'inadequate' and 'fail to protect people'. In a letter to a family in which two young boys died within two months of going on Epilim, Coulter wrote: 'so long as reporting of adverse drug effects is as delayed and incomplete as it was in your experience, future tragedies may occur from some other chemical concoction'.

For the Byes, the tragedy of their daughter's death is still fresh. Derek Bye said: 'I feel we cannot bury Helenor until we get the truth.' In a death like that of Helenor Bye, there is no investigative process that parents can turn to. Doctors become defensive, regardless of whether or not there are grounds for blaming them. Inquests fail to get at the truth. The parents are then left to their own devices. Either they accuse doctors of negligence, notoriously difficult to prove and in some cases inappropriate, or they are forced to retell their story endlessly to whoever will listen.

Seven years on, the truth of Helenor's death becomes more and more difficult to establish. Until there is some process of investigation that allows the medical profession and parents to come together and uncover what has happened, avoidable deaths will recur. Not only that but also parents like the Byes will be left with a dead child that they 'cannot bury.'

Just before Easter the Byes handed a file of evidence to the police. They do not have much hope that anything will come of this. □

Speak nicely to the media

Mandy Merck

'THERE IS now nothing remarkable, extraordinary, or arresting about the assertion that the media are biased', observed Communications lecturer Ian Connell in the recent collection *Television Mythologies*[1]. Such a conviction may render the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom's new publication — *Media Hits the Pits*[2] — all too obvious for the likes of Connell and the readers of this column. But *Guardian* writer Patrick Wintour's response to the pamphlet this week, and the Campaign's response to him, proved useful reminders of just how complicated that commonplace remains.

The Campaign's 'picture of a growing right wing monopoly press and a subservient broadcast media' accuses both of distorting, suppressing and actively campaigning against the NUM's position in the 'coal dispute'.

It was the legislated neutrality of television news which led the Glasgow Media Group to formulate their structural analysis of bias in the mid-70s. Armed with the play-back facility of the VCR and the belated Left conviction that television might be as politically important as the press, the Glasgow researchers produced three volumes dedicated to the decoding of newsroom routines, bulletin breakdowns, interview procedures, editing techniques and dominant themes.

It's hard to remember how inimical this structural analysis was to a Left who viewed the issue of bias largely in terms of lies told by conscious conspirators. In an important sense, the revision of that earlier assumption about the news was tied to the seachange in socialist thinking about ideology in general — no longer a veil to be parted by an educated vanguard, but the very substance of people's views about everything from professional ethics to what constitutes a fact.

Media Hits the Pits employs such an analysis, noting how both the IBA and the BBC have historically defined political legitimacy in terms of legality; how police violence encouraged journalists to site themselves behind their lines rather than in front of them, producing pictures and reports from the police viewpoint; how television's bias toward the pictorial and the recent speed-up in both networks' pacing of news items favoured the visible daily event over the long-term abstract explanation.

But the Campaign also document a substantial number of cases in which responsible individuals directly manipulated the reporting of the dispute: the March '84 *Sunday Telegraph* story on the government's energy contingency plans which Peter Walker had pulled from later editions: Robert Maxwell's deletion of the original headline and ten paragraphs of Geoffrey Goodman's July 27 '85 *Mirror* piece on Thatcher's vengeful attitude towards the miners; the BBC news item which showed mounted police knocking down fleeing miners with a voice-over commenting, 'As the convoy approached the pickets charged . . .'

Confronted with this evidence for what might be described as both neo- and palaeo-bias, Patrick Wintour chose to respond to the Campaign with late Len Murrayism. Back in '79, the TUC leader instructed the troops to 'make the best of the situation in which we find ourselves', introducing an educational pamphlet on how union officials could improve relations with local media. Having discovered the routines of reporting, the TUC suggested, the labour movement should smarten up its own PR. Thus Wintour's complaints that the NUM failed to set the agenda in the dispute by employing just one national press officer, holding too few press briefings and failing to publicise detailed expositions of the economic case for coal. In his view, the NUM's (and the CPBF's) pessimism about the media was a self-fulfilling prophesy, effectively discouraging any real attempt at counter-propaganda.

'Blame,' Wintour concluded in the classic *Guardian* summation, 'must rest with both sides.'

Must it really? Just prior to his conclusion, Wintour concedes that even if initiatives such as the proposed secondment of an experienced NUJ hand to the NUM press office had come off, the effect would have been only marginal. This doesn't seem so different from the Campaign's reply that such a tactic 'in small ways . . . regulates the arbitrary use of power by editors, proprietors and governors'. But how would the progressive PR school explain the mainstream media's neglect of the pro-NUM publicity produced by supporting groups — from the pioneering use of video in the Miners Campaign Tapes to the dossier on incidents of bias which *Tribune* compiled for Fleet Street? Or its failure to pick up the more responsible reports which emerged from its own ranks — notably Channel 4 News? And what about all those groups and individuals without a Press Officer to rub between them?

Surely, the CPBF has a point when it recommends — not abandoning public persuasion through the media, as Wintour implied — but insisting upon access to it through a variety of structural reforms: an end to monopoly ownership, repeal of Official Secrets laws and the establishment of publically owned printing facilities and genuinely accountable regulatory bodies. Without such a strategy, that ragbag of positions which comprises the Left's views on media bias looks a little threadbare. □

[1] Edited by Len Masterman, Comedia.
[2] Available for £1.50 plus postage from CPBF, 9 Doland St, London W1.

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DIARY

Eachann Domhnullach

These are hard times and if I read the signs correctly we haven't seen the half of it yet. During this last week several gentlefolk (in reduced circumstances) that I know well have been nabbed by Social Security snoops. They've been summoned to the local buroo, have had their rights read to them and removed. 'Listen,' they've been told, 'we know it isn't easy to live on £56 a week but you should have admitted you were gainfully employed for four days in April. We could have you jailed for three months, ye ken, but because you have a wife and two young children we'll be lenient this time. We'll just strike you off our books.' In the meantime these struck-off gentlemen have to feed their families on whatever they can win through their wits. And we all ken what that can lead to. I happen to know that most of those accused are as honest as anyone you'd meet in a long day's walk but they have to eat. So, they look around, see me with plenty and before you know it, they're over my fence and into my vegetables. Dash it all, I voted Tory because she promised this sort of thing would be stopped.

○

When I said I voted Tory, I mean Tory in the traditional sense with a small 'o'. I was perhaps an inside left rather than a centre forward. In an earlier age I could perhaps have been the son of a shopkeeper but now I thank the Lord I only inherited a small farm which means I can afford the size of overdraft that will allow my daughters to go to college on maximum grant. I see problems in the future, however, because if my children have inherited their forbears' fecundity it is only a matter of time until their own offspring will have to become civil servants. The farm can only stand so many subdivisions.

This civil service thing worries me a lot, not only because they cannot fiddle their income figures but because everyone hates them so much. Recently I chanced upon a philosophical conclusion of our Prime Minister's (arrived at after a kinky party in Washington) that we should not worry about resignations from the public service until they reached 12 per cent — the quit factor they called it. I think it must have worried Mr Pym also because, although his croft is much bigger than mine, it is only a matter of time until his progeny will also have to become civil servants, or (heaven forbid) farmhands. Anyway I contacted some journalist friends with access to liberal publications like the *Guardian* and the *Glasgow Herald*. Could they perhaps do a piece on the plight of the British civil servant? Certainly not. Sob stories about poverty-stricken civil servants don't sell. There you have it my friends.

○

I had entertained notions of leaving the party. Then Our Lady with the Lamp came to Perth. To call my experience a conversion is to mock and diminish St Paul's uplifting on the road to Edinburgh. Perhaps those of you who remember the well-malted George Brown's transformation on hearing Solzhenitsyn can understand what I felt when Mrs Thatcher quoted the 'Tory Robert Burns'. In one illuminating flash the lady's reading of his verse convinced me that everything I had hitherto thought to be red was really blue. We were so blind but now we see.

○

Two important events took place in Scotland last week. One was very important to a few thousand people, the other was of passing importance to five million. The latter is of course ('of course' because one assumes we all think football is the greatest game in the world) the Scotland-England International. This is the day we all become temporary nationalists. Five million deprived dervishes take on a sleek army of fifty million.

But that is child's play. The other event gets little publicity south of the border. Come to think of it, it doesn't get much publicity north of the Wall either. Yet many of us care. I refer to the National Assembly of the Kirk in Edinburgh. Every year about this time we expect a pious proclamation from the Free Presbyterian Church and they never disappoint us. This year they have announced, with the terrifying conviction that only they can muster, that modern popular music is composed by the Devil. For once I am in full agreement with them.

○

It is good to know that in the midst of this depression someone cares about the unemployed. The someone in this case is Compte Robin Ian Evelyn Stuart de la Lanne-Mirrlees. The good Compte has in mind to

solve the economic problems of a little offshore island with a 'tartan factory'. Let me give you a list of his titles from our local paper. He is Laird of Bernera, Freeman of the City of London, Patrician of San Marino and the Prince of Coronata. He was also Richmond Herald of Arms and aide-de-camp to someone who fondly imagined he was the King of Yugoslavia from 1963 to 1970. He lives in London, Paris, Le Touquet, Austria and Banff. I have no doubt the Compte means well but I am deeply suspicious of someone who needs so many hideouts and a different alias for every day of the week. Before we welcome this man, I would like to know more about him, if anybody can supply any information.

ROGER WODDIS

Whitman throwing up

'Stampede is on for Star Wars golden trough.' — Observer *headline. According to a Congressional Study, almost one American child in four lives in a family whose income is below the official poverty line*

I think I could turn and live with vultures,
They are so honest and self-denying,
I look at them feasting long and long.
They do not make a clamour about human rights,
With one claw in the till;
They do not lie through their capped teeth
And fiddle their government contracts;
They do not make me sick
Praising family life and proclaiming their belief in God.
Not one is a crooked admiral,
Or a maker of arms or a kept politician.
Not one is a General Dynamics executive
With a flair for creative accounting.
Not one devours the living or starves a child
In the sacred name of freedom,
Or calls himself a research scientist.
Not one is a defence secretary or a president
Over the whole earth.

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IT AIN'T WHAT YOU . . .

Reagan seems to have blown his chances of aid to the *contras*. But it was his own lack of political tact rather than a firm Democratic policy which did the trick, says Claudia Wright

Washington

IT HAS BEEN officially announced that on 21 May President Reagan clenched his fist and banged it on a White House table in angry frustration at his recent foreign policy defeats in the House of Representatives. In a hastily worded remark flashed at him by the teleprompter, the President told a delegation of Republicans: 'We have got to get where we can run a foreign policy without a committee of 535 telling us what we can do.'

Stemming from the Administration's defeat by Congress on aid to the Nicaraguan *Contras*, the attack reflects a refusal to accept the constitutional doctrine of the separation of powers. The requirement in US law that Congress must declare and finance the war that presidents wish to fight has annoyed every modern president since Franklin Roosevelt. Until the Vietnam war was lost, however, this was an annoyance around which clever White House politicians could always find their way.

In this respect, the Reagan camp is a victim of its own clearly signalled intentions and blunt hyperbole. As a result there appears to be a more concerned and coherent opposition to their war policies among congressional Democrats than actually exists. No one outside the US — neither US allies in Europe nor targets of Administration violence in the Third World — should count on the Democrats for an alternative foreign policy. The most the Democrats can do is to vote 'No'.

John Minnion

SEVERAL MISTAKES of the Reagan Administration's own making have made it much easier for the Democratic opposition to rally the 220 to 240 votes (out of the House total of 435) that have been cast since 1982 to restrict US military intervention in Nicaragua. The President and his entourage have failed to understand the golden rules in seeking congressional acquiescence in war-making — never fight more than one war at a time, and don't ask for congressional support for a new war in an election year.

Once the Administration had won the fateful vote in September 1983 to allow the marines to fight the Moslems of Beirut — on that vote House Democrats split almost evenly, 130 in favour, 134 against — there was little prospect of Democratic support to allow indefinite funding for the erstwhile covert war in Nicaragua. Accordingly, a month later on 20 October, 1983, the House voted 227 to 194 against the Administration's support of the *Contras*.

Golden rule no. 2 took effect during the elections of last year. The Administration was forced to beat a hasty retreat for Lebanon, and the House majority voting against military aid to the *Contras* increased with fresh Democratic and Republican recruits to nearly 300. The election-year rule will apply again in 1986, when all of the House and an unusually large number of Republican Senators will face re-election. And so the current congressional battles over Nicaragua are probably the last chance the Republicans will have to get their way while Reagan is president. After 1986 he will be largely irrelevant, and Vice President George Bush and other Republican candidates to succeed him will call the tune.

Two other Administration problems have made it considerably easier for the House Democrats to bury their differences, and persuade Republicans to join them in voting 'No'. The Administration's enormous defence spending requests have inflated the budget deficit to the point where it has become correspondingly more difficult to get Congress to vote for foreign aid increases. The military budget has so isolated the price of American arms that far more US aid is now needed to enable US clients to afford them.

However, Israel's supporters have rallied an overwhelming majority to advance Israel another $1.5 billion in 'emergency aid' that will be 'matched' by another $500 million grant to Egypt, leaving little 'aid' left. Democratic opponents of Administration foreign policy can posture to their constituents as fiscal conservatives in saying 'No' to increases, even though they lack the political will to criticise the Administration's aid requests for specific countries.

THE FINANCIAL contingencies are complicated by the way in which the Democratic Party is split on foreign policy issues in the House. There are ideological splits in the party with, largely, the liberals coming from the Northern states. But there are also ways in which Congress procedure makes it difficult to keep the party together. Two legislatively independent channels exist for foreign policy initiatives; one enacts what is called authorising legislation and the second enacts the funds or appropriations to pay for them. Two distinct hierarchies of committees and sub-committees and their ambitious chairs jealously preserve their jurisdictions over each. Ever since the Reagan Administration came to power in 1981, the House and Senate have failed to enact a single foreign aid authorising bill. This in turn has given unprecedented new foreign policy power to the chairs of the appropriating committees.

The political arithmetic needed to control these committees is difficult for Democratic Party leaders to calculate at the best of times. It is much more difficult now because the

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Democratic Party speaker, Tip O'Neill of Massachusetts, is retiring next year, and his succession creates an internal party contest for the jobs of speaker, majority leader, whip and deputy whip that will all fall vacant if their current occupants move up. Nobody wants to risk offending the party consensus on controversial votes before they are safely seated.

But no one can be sure what the party consensus is. When every Democratic Representative's recorded votes for 1984 are compared to the way the Democratic majority voted on each rollcall it turns out that the 10 most conforming Representatives are individuals (half of them from California) who are almost unheard of and lack committee power. The Democratic Party thus lacks a genuine consensus or 'middle'. Jim Wright of Texas, the current majority leader and likely successor to O'Neill, voted with his party's majority only 73 per cent of the time last year; by contrast the top ten loyalists scored from 93 to 97 per cent. The Democratic whip, Tom Foley of Washington State, voted 81 per cent with the party majority, while the deputy whip, Bill Alexander of Arkansas, voted little more than half the time on the Democratic side (57 per cent). The important thing about Wright and Alexander is that they are southern Democrats, and on Central America, military adventures in general, and defence spending, this regional bloc is much more willing to vote with the President than the northern Democrats.

IN FOREIGN policy, the one issue on which the House Democrats can be counted to vote together is support for Israel. On virtually all other issues, the party is in disagreement. The northern liberal bloc of about 100 votes is too small to defeat the President on any issue. To win they are usually obliged to obtain the support of at least 60 other Democrats and 40 Republicans. On 23 April, when Reagan's request to authorise $14 million in US military aid to the Nicaraguan *Contras* was voted down, 163 out of 167 northern Democrats voted against the request; southern Democrats were more narrowly divided, 36 to 45 against. The Republicans were 140 to 40 in favour. Without that margin of 40 Republican votes — most of them from California or the New England states — the opposition would have fallen short.

Just *how* short is evident from the vote on a resolution denying US military or economic assistance to Chile that was called the day before the vote on Nicaragua. It was defeated 206 to 191 — 143 northern Democrats, 25 southern Democrats and 23 Republicans were not enough to pass even a measure that was merely advisory and lacked binding effect.

The need to maintain a fragile coalition across regional and party boundaries is what inhibits either party from developing a clear-cut — and hence partisan — position on foreign policy issues. Lee Hamilton of Indiana, chair of the Intelligence Committee and the Europe/Middle East Sub-committee, and Michael Barnes of Maryland, Chair of the inter-American affairs sub-committee, are the crucial intermediaries in negotiating the compromises on Central American policy that liberal Republicans and conservative northern Democrats can both accept.

The result is unpredictability and contradiction. Reagan's rhetoric on Central American has helped to defeat him on Congress because a majority of members feel more frightened at not voting against the Administration's war policy than at being labelled soft on communism. When the margin of victory is narrow, the weakest, most vacillating, or most recently arrived members of the opposition coalition can find themselves in a position to dictate the terms of the legislative compromise. For this reason very few Democrats, even in the liberal bloc, can agree on anything broader than saying 'no' to war. None of them will argue for a policy of *no* US pressure against the Sandinistas.

In these circumstances, the Democrats who lead the party on foreign policy by chairing the regional sub-committees of the Foreign Affairs Committee find obscurantism and contradiction a political asset rather an intellectual failing. Stephen Solarz, for example, a New York liberal and Chair of the East Asia sub-committee, postures as an ardent supporter of tough measures to prevent nuclear proliferation, but he has carefully drafted legislation this session to ensure that US sanctions would not apply to Israel, which has built its nuclear warheads from stolen US materials and technology. Solarz voted against US aid to the Nicaraguan *Contras*, but has sponsored the first grant ($5 million) of US aid to Cambodian guerrilla groups in Thailand.

Liberal Democrats who have travelled to Nicaragua are infatuated by the reluctance of the Sandinistas to make the kind of compromises that Congressional politics demand. They also admit that the Sandinistas understand US politics very well. When the Democrats are told in Managua that their anti-war position in Congress will eventually evaporate, they concede the prediction but say it will be the Sandinistas who are to blame. □

COMMON MARKET

TRADING IN DEFEAT

Ten years of the EEC have given Britain only lies, humiliation and a supply of unwanted food argues Nicholas Faith

TEN YEARS AGO, on Thursday 5 June 1975 to be precise the whole United Kingdom — with the honourable exception of the Shetlands and the Western Isles — voted overwhelmingly to stay in the Common Market. Ten years on, 'the Referendum' appears a major landmark. In the words of that archetypal centrist, Reg Prentice, the campaign had 'united the majority of realistic and moderate politicians of all three political parties. I believe our co-operation has been welcomed by millions of people throughout Britain, who have become fed up with the traditional party dogfight'.

Prentice's hopes were Barbara Castle's fears. Membership of the EEC, she wrote: 'will give a great fillip to consensus politics'. The campaign set into concrete the way the whole centre — Tory wets, Liberals and potential SDP — thought about Britain. They did it through two Big Lies: that the EEC would — or could — develop into something more than a gigantic system of out-relief for Europe's farmers; and that we could not survive economically in the chill air outside.

It is easy enough to dismiss the referendum. Constitutionally it proved to be a one-off experiment and even at the time its impact was swamped by the economic crisis which exploded a few weeks later. In the words of David Butler and Uwe Kitzinger, authors of the standard work on the referendum: 'as summer advanced into autumn it became very hard to find in the media any allusion to the events that had culminated on June 5th'. The arguments now seem terribly dated: the antis' fears of loss of sovereignty as groundless as the pros' hopes of progress towards a truly united Europe.

In political history the referendum could be seen merely as the final, and devastating conjuring trick performed by the master-magician Harold Wilson. He used it to reunite the Labour Party over Europe — and to retain within it the 69 zealots who had supported Edward Heath in the first, crucial vote to join the market in 1971, most of whom subsequently joined the SDP. 'The campaign has been very carefully calculated' wrote Dick Leonard, 'as a means to put Roy back in the political race'. But he was outsmarted by Harold Wilson. The trick he played showed prodigious skill — for the party was committed to a *real* renegotiation of the terms of British membership of the EEC not the sham fight Wilson and Jim Callaghan conducted in the winter of 1974-75.

The trick saved the centralists — the self-appointed Brightest and Best — from total loss of control, for a 'No' vote would have been a bitter final blow to what Butler and Kitzinger call 'the established leadership of the country'. In the previous two years this had been shattered by the impact of the first oil shock, miners' strike, the slump on the stock market, the bankruptcy (moral as well as financial) of so much of the City of London, the defeat of Mr Heath, first in two general elections and then, early in 1975, by Mrs Thatcher. In the referendum campaign the Best and the Brightest, the 'reasonable people', headed by Heath, Roy Jenkins and Jeremy Thorpe reaffirmed their predominance in the natural order of things. Even the clergy, organised by an eager young Conservative Churchman, John Selwyn Gummer, toed the line. This self-appointed elite clearly saw the referendum — which they had initially opposed tooth and nail — as an act of exorcism, saving the country from the extremism so fully represented among the antis — above all by those twin mavericks, Enoch Powell and Tony Benn.

The reasonable classes, under threat,

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behaved like a bunch of tough extremists. The atmosphere, for one of the rare journalists like myself openly against the EEC, was extraordinary. Never in modern times, not at the time of Suez, or the recent miners' strike or (as I would guess) at the time of Munich, was the 'Big World' so united. It was simply inconceivable that someone in their right mind should be anti. Sir Con O'Neill, the ex-diplomat who was director of the Britain in Europe Campaign, even felt outraged that the BBC and IBA should feel obliged to provide equal time for both sides, and although his political superiors showed greater tact they felt the same underneath.

The Europeans outspent the wretched antis ten to one, and used their money and their undoubted professional skills to good purpose. People felt so scared that they were in no mood to take a risk of any sort, even to have a community for which they had never really cared. But the pros did succeed in hammering home that we could not survive outside, and that the market had a major political future, in which the Common Agricultural Policy would, like the Marxist state, wither away.

These two were both Big Lies, boosted by a subsidiary untruth. The anti-marketeers' only important weapon was the fear of increased prices, above all of food, inevitable through remaining in the market. By an extraordinary stroke of luck, 1974-75 saw the only few months in the past quarter of a century when world prices of food rose above those in the EEC, and membership actually saved us from a — very temporary — shortage of sugar. On this accident the pros built a mountain of theory. 'If we left the market tomorrow' said Shirley Williams, 'we could not expect any reduction in the overall cost of our food as a result'. True at the time, but never before and never since, and what is more, there is no foreseeable chance of it ever being true again.

TIME MAY HAVE exposed this particular fib as a piece of opportunist rubbish, but the other Lies — that Europe will eventually amount to more than the CAP and that we are unviable outside it — remain the accepted wisdom, unchallenged even by Mrs Thatcher. The two strands are rather different, emerging from the two separate groups which made up the apparently homogenous European Movement, groups best described as Petainists and Old Bolsheviks.

The withering away of the CAP was a dream, still dreamt by the minority who had believed in our membership of the European Community since the 1950s, when the Foreign Office and Anthony Eden so contemptuously refused to involve us in Europe. The Old Bolsheviks — the true believers — could not bring themselves to accept that their original dream had been perverted: that, in Britain's absence, the ruthless political skills of General de Gaulle had limited the EEC to a means of harnessing Germany to the cause of financing a major shift of the French population from agriculture to industry. De Gaulle magnificently succeeded in his strategy, but at the cost of permanently crippling the EEC, ensuring that something over two thirds of its funds, and much more of its intellectual and political resources, would be everlastingly absorbed by the Agromorass, leaving neither funds nor energy for more positive purposes. As a corollary, de Gaulle ensured that the EEC Commission itself should lack power and that national vetos would preclude supranationality or any taint of Federalism.

These Old Bolsheviks, like their progenitors, were a noble breed. I don't like attacking them, because, to continue the analogy, I feel like a 1930s Trotskyite, in that I'm a European, but deeply convinced that the EEC's Brussels is the equivalent of Stalin's Moscow, can never develop into a positive instrument. It could have done if we had gone in at the start, but we didn't so it can't and that's that.

The Old Bolsheviks (like those who stood beside Lenin in October 1917) were a band smaller than was later supposed. They included Edward Heath and Roy Jenkins — his bravest political act was to oppose Hugh Gaitskell at the Labour Conference of October 1962 immediately after his beloved leader had made one of the greatest speeches of his life attacking our proposed entry. Gaitskell's pessimism, his feeling that the Community had little or nothing to contribute to international affairs, has been proved only too true. As he pointed out, the choice was plain: a Federal Europe meant the end of Britain as an independent nation and a non-Federal Europe was a pretty pointless institution.

Gaitskell's only true disciple was the late Tony Crosland. In the early 1970s Crosland's scepticism made him a leper in the eyes of Labour's Eurofanatics, who otherwise proclaimed themselves true Gaitskellites. To Crosland, as to his master, 'entry into Europe was marginal to democratic Socialism'. In Susan Barnes's words, 'Crosland was still pro-Europe but if it became a question of keeping Mr Heath in power by voting for Europe then he would not do so'. In 1975 his reasons for supporting the Europeans were equally pragmatic: 'to withdraw now would create in this country a mood of poor man's inchoate chauvinism, reviving old dreams of Empire and special relationship that have had such disastrous effects on British policy making since 1945'.

But the vast majority of the Europeans were 'Petainists', and they dictated the tone of the campaign far more than the Old Bolsheviks, ensuring, crucially, that there was no mention of immediate progress towards a Federal Europe. At a local level, wrote Butler and Kitzinger (himself an Old Bolshevik), 'people who had witnessed to the European faith when it was still heresy found themselves jostled out of their offices' in favour of better known late converts.

But the Petainists ensured that fear not hope was the keynote of the campaign. For the British Petainists, like their French equivalents in 1940, felt themselves crushed, defeated, without alternatives, 'managers of Britain's decline' in the words of the late head of the Civil Service, William Armstrong. In their despair they were prepared to accept any humiliations. Typically, they had all been fanatical free traders, even if it meant sacrificing British industry. Nevertheless they now felt obliged to swallow the anti-free trade CAP as the price for remaining in the EEC. Even more contemptibly hypocritical were the consumerists. The CAP stood for everything they opposed — protection of producers,

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complete disdain for the interests of consumers. Nevertheless (and even before Roy Jenkins's wife became chairwoman of Consumers' Association) Eirlys Roberts, one of its leaders, was one of the pros' most indefatigable spokespersons.

THE BIG LIE, with all the hypocrisies it involved was — and still is — based on fear, not reality. It was assumed, then as now, that our departure from the EEC would lead to an immediate economic crisis. 'This is no time for Britain to consider leaving a Christmas Club, let alone the Common Market', proclaimed Sir Christopher Soames.

It might have been different if anyone they could trust had assured them of the contrary. The task was left to Peter Shore, most eloquent of antis:

> What the advocates of membership are saying, insistently and insidiously, is that we are finished as a nation; that the long and famous story of the British nation and people has ended; that we are now so weak and powerless that we must accept terms and conditions, penalties and limitations, almost as though we had suffered defeat in war; that though we have the right to vote on June 5, we have no option but to remain in the Common Market age.

The pros' assumptions were clearly stated in their statement that if we withdrew: 'It is very doubtful if we could then negotiate a free trade agreement with the Community. Even if we could it would have damaging limitations and we would have to accept many community rules without having the say we now have in their making'. The fear was systematically exploited by the business community supporting the market, which gagged any who might not have toed the line, and spread a mass of scare literature. Typically the chairman of Guest Keen and Nettlefold wrote to his employees that, if we voted No, 'then our future and our families' well-being will be at risk'. 'A vote to leave the market', intoned Harold Wilson, 'would have a serious and damaging effect on employment'.

What tosh, and to refute it one has only to return to the reason the late President Pompidou allowed us in the market in the first place, largely because he saw this country as the only possible outlet for EEC's everlastingly increasing surplus of agricultural produce. 'We are not forced to go into Europe . . . the economic argument is no more than evenly balanced', Hugh Gaitskell had said in 1962. And this remained true thirteen years later, although, such was the intellectual climate, that few economists were prepared to stand up and say so.

If we had voted No, or we decided to withdraw even today, the diplomatic balance would be obvious. The industrialists within the EEC would be very keen to retain their access to the British market where they enjoy such an increasing dominance, so they would be fighting for a prompt agreement on free trade. They might be keen, but the agricultural interests would be desperate: we remain the biggest single market for the EEC's agricultural surpluses, and the only one prepared to pay full price. If we withdrew, then we would be as free as the Russians now are to screw down prices to a fraction of those we now pay.

Put like that, I am being rather unfair to the original Petainists. Their country had, after all, been beaten. The British equivalents merely *felt* defeated. And perhaps the saddest epitaph on the referendum is that it has been Mrs Thatcher, not a Labour Prime Minister, who has put herself forward as the terror of the Europeans, the stalwart defender of the national interest. When Harold Wilson orchestrated the 'renegotiation' and the referendum he thus sided with the Petainists: he condemned the Labour Party to appear, indeed to be, the party of whinge and defeatism, the acceptors of national inadequacy. □

ZIMBABWE

BOTTOM OF THE PILE — YET AGAIN

Sue Shaw on what independence hasn't done for women

'THINGS ARE getting worse here. We're frightened to go out of our homes. You hear footsteps at night and hide under the bed in case they have come to take you away,' says Mary Mutarara who lives in Zimbabwe. As the June elections draw near, women where she lives in Sakubva Township, Manikaland Province, speak of beatings, evictions and the destruction of furniture by the Youth Brigade of the Ruling Party, ZANU PF. A spokeswoman for the Youth League of the Opposition, ZAPU, says that she can name 20 people evicted from Sakubva in the last month.

'After Independence we thought things would improve,' says Mary. 'We thought we would get jobs, but things have got worse. We are suffering. Before, we worked for white people as cooks or domestics. Now no one will employ us. The factories have closed down.' She points out that the nearby British Leyland factory, employer of many Sakubva workers, is about to close. It is not that there are no jobs, she says, but you need a ZANU PF card. Without one, finding employment is impossible. 'What shall we do? We shall starve.'

Some women dispute the accuracy of these accounts. Julia, a medical assistant at Zimunya and ex-soldier from the army, believes there have been improvements. 'Life is much better now,' she says. 'It is much easier than in the bush. For myself it is easier. If you are educated, then it is no problem.'

Ms Julia Zvobgo, Secretary for Information and Publicity for the Women's League of the Ruling Party says, 'I think women have advanced a lot since Independence, but that advancement is mixed up with the advancement of the whole of Zimbabwe.' There are many more women than before in universities and polytechnics, as well as occupying the higher professional spheres. She points out that there is a woman Minister for Community Development and Women's Affairs, and that there are female Under Secretaries in nearly every Ministry.

Ms Zvobgo sees the Women's League as being crucial in changes: 'Going into rural areas, mobilising women. Asking the government to deal with women's problems and demanding changes.' She says: 'The League encourages women's groups to work with it. It is like a political mother instructing the path the government wants us to go. Most women are members of ZANU.'

A spokeswoman for the Women's League of the Opposition argues that those women who are not members do not have the same rights as those who are. She says that the League's gatherings in Sakubva have been cancelled over the last month because they were seen as political meetings.

WHICHEVER view you take, it is indisputable that life is hard for women with little education. Mary lives in a three-room house in Sakubva, which she shares with two other women. It has no running water or inside toilet, and electricity is rationed from 6am to 6pm. Until recently she ran a shabine (illegal distillery), but was forced to stop after being arrested and fined. She now supports her four children by selling marijuana, which she sees as the only alternative to prostitution.

Like many others in the area, the two women who share Mary's house make their money from the 'beer halls': sleeping with men. The average rate for this is 10 dollars a night, dropping as low as two dollars. 'What can you do? Life is hard. You have to make enough money to get Sadza. Sadza and soap,' says another woman, Thelma. 'No, it is not enough money. I must save for two years before I can buy clothes.'

For many, such a life is preferable to marriage because of the economic independence if offers. 'It's better to stay alone,' says Thelma. 'Most men get paid on Friday and they go straight to the beer halls. They stay all night drinking Chibooku, and what have they got left for their families? If you are alone you can go to the beer halls. You have your own money.'

As in Britain, it's the prostitutes, not the men, who risk being picked up by the police. The women fear another round-up like that which took place back in November 1980, known as 'Operation Clean-up.' Sarah, who was held in Central Prison for six days during that time, descibes what happened: 'They asked me: 'Are you married?' I said: "Divorced". "Are you working?" I told them: "I take men from the bars and they pay me money". They said: "Have you children?" I said: "Three". They asked me if I had brothers. I said: "All my brothers went to Mozambique where they were killed. I have no father, no husband, so what shall I do? I don't know how to live." '

However, the government says it's not their policy to harass prostitutes. According to Ms Zvobgo: 'The round-ups were a mistake and the government has apologised for it. Most of the women were roaming the streets because they weren't trained, and the government organised that they should go to college. They were supposed to be taken to colleges. It was a mistake that someone gave the wrong order.' But as Mary points out, the fear created by such an event drives many to support the Opposition Party. After all, she says, you don't vote for someone who intimidates you. □

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LETTERS

Is the Cold War ours?

Peter Cadogan, London NW3

Sarah Benton hit the nail on the head when she wrote (*NS* 17 May): 'CND has to decide how it is to achieve a breakthrough'. But was she right in suggesting that the options are limited to two and that the more likely one is 'majority opposition to Britain's possession of nuclear weapons'?

After 27 years of campaigning I think we know by now that this country's weapons are not the major issue — that honour belongs to the weapons and intentions of the super-powers and the way in which we underwrite them. Surely the questions we now have to ask are: 'Is the Cold War ours?' 'Can we promote its thaw by getting out and doing ourselves a service in the process?'

We have up to three years until the next general election. What if CND was to drop its political partisanship and put every candidate of all parties on the spot with the question: 'Will you pledge yourself to the neutrality of Britain, this meaning departure from NATO, the end of *all* US bases in Britain, the scrapping of nuclear weapons and the proper dissuasive defence of this now defenceless country on conventional lines?' That indeed would be a breakthrough and it means a break with CND's hidden agenda, i.e. support for a Labour Party whose policy commends only the reform of NATO 'from within' and an end to US *nuclear* bases only.

We have an extraordinary situation at the moment. CND is in marked decline in terms of activity, has no answer to Sarah Benton's question and yet is still growing! This can only mean that people feel in their bones that something has to be done, despite the fact that a dismayed and divided leadership knows not what to say or do. A new campaign should start in the autumn.

Opening up government

Hilary Barnard, London E8

Peter Hain's thoughts on how the machinery of government could be changed and opened out (*NS* 24 May) should not have been dismissed so rapidly by Neil Kinnock. The Thatcher government has recognised how present structures are seriously ill equipped for and inhibit radical change.

An incoming Kinnock government would find in Whitehall a service remote from the issues that government will have been elected to tackle. One does not have to be an advocate of civil service conspiracy theories to believe that service will work to stay the way it knows and loves.

What was refreshing in Peter Hain's article was his recognition that a new Labour government will need to do much more than take in suitable political advisers, create new Ministries, or ensure greater access to governmental information. While these would all be welcome, they are too piecemeal. It is the doors of the Ministries that need to be opened wide so that the ideas and aspirations of the shopfloors and local communities can be heard direct and be at the heart of consequent change.

Neil Kinnock may well want to reassure civil servants about their job security but it should not be at the expense of changes in the process of government.

Training courtesy of Shah

S. J. Shah, News (UK) Ltd, Warrington

After reading Paul Foot's article 'Banking on Shah to make the break' (*NS* 3 May), I would like to clarify two inaccuracies.

Mr Foot inaccurately reports that Messenger Newspapers Group is not prepared to send its young journalists on the correct training courses. Messenger Newspapers in 1984 were the first free newspaper group to ever send its journalists on the NCTJ training course and all our young reporters are taking part in recognised NCTJ courses.

I believe that the Association of Free Newspapers (AFN) is, at present, negotiating to send journalists of free newspapers on similar courses. We, at Messenger, would welcome such a move by the Association as we believe that fully trained journalists are important to the future of our industry and it is up to the companies involved to invest in this future.

Mr Foot states that the Group made less than £5,000 in 1984. The truth is that the Company made a profit of over £235,000 but was hit by an extraordinary large amount of deferred taxation due to the Chancellor's new Capital Tax Laws during his budget. This tax revision affected many companies with capital expenditures and allowances during that year.

Questions for Mr Elstein

Arthur Murray, Horndean, Portsmouth

It would have been nice if David Elstein ('Feedback', *NS* 17 May) had addressed himself to some of the questions raised by the funding of commercial television and radio.

Their funding comes from advertising. But how is advertising funded? By a surcharge on products. Paint, cars, tights etc. all cost that little bit extra in order to pay for their promotion. And how much is a viewer's annual grocery bill, mortgage etc. increased by all these surcharges? £58? Or more? Most TV adverts are pretty expensive productions.

What about viewers who don't watch commercial television? Can they avoid the surcharges by not buying the products? Will the commercial television industry send these viewers a list of TV-advertised products so they will know what to avoid buying?

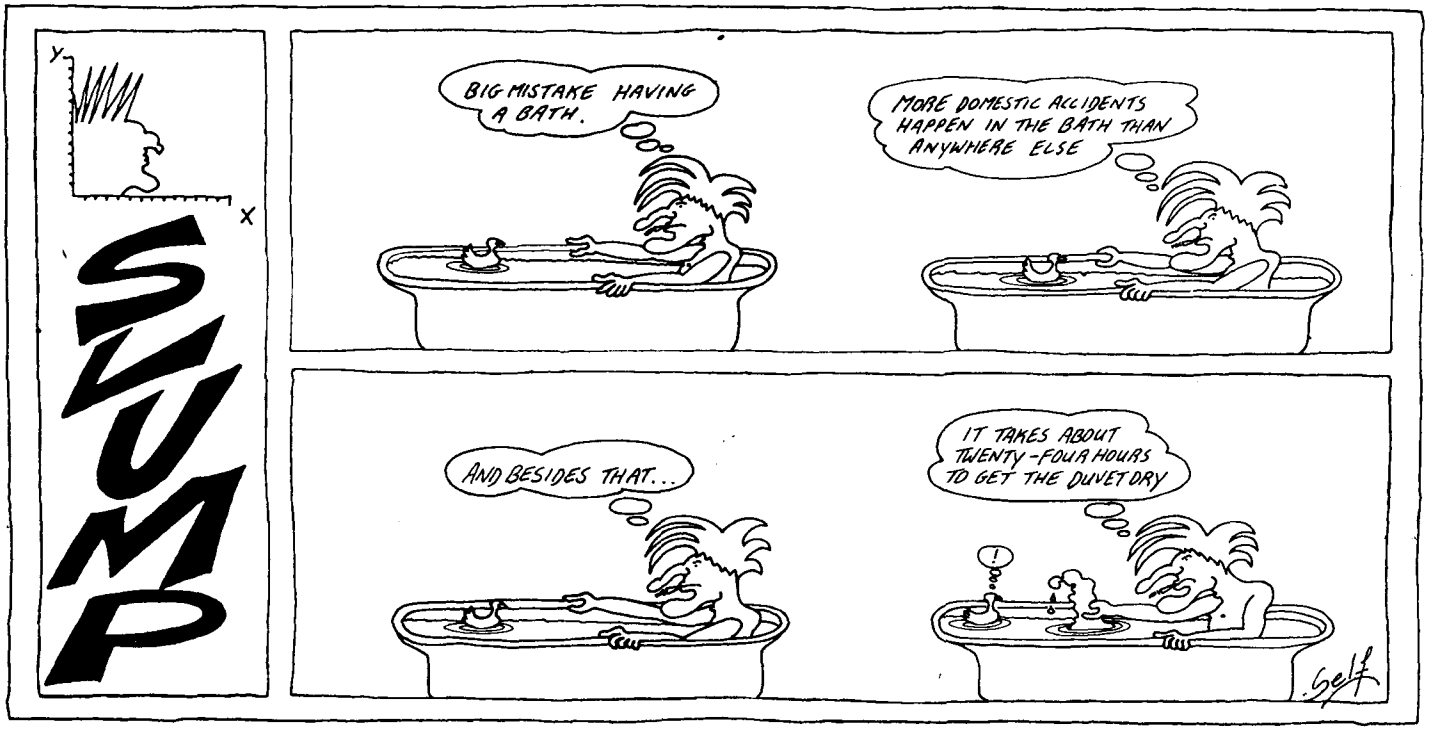
And what about people without TV sets?

Mobility for the individual

Peter Witt, British Federation, London WC2

It takes an ingenious — not to say one-tracked — mind to reduce personal mobility to a question of class and sex. Given this objective Mick Hamer (*NS* 17 May), quite clearly, is the man for the job.

Next to a home and a secure job, personal mobility is something to which we all aspire. Rich or poor, young or old and, in Mr Hamer's terms, regardless of class. Mobility means freedom of



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movement — on foot or on wheels. There is nothing wrong with aspiring to any of these in whatever personal mix we choose. A better road system — which the British Road Federation wishes to see — is equally as relevant to public transport as to private.

However much the majority may aspire to car ownership — and they do, Mr Hamer — there will always be some who rely on public transport. They need the reliability and speed which can only be provided by a better road system than we presently have — particularly in the conurbations.

The Labour Party — quite rightly — is laying emphasis on infrastructure investment. Forget about Mr Hamer's misuse and abuse of statistics. Let us get down to the realities of a better highway system for *all* road users.

Unions, racism, and its roots

Colin Robertson, Westminster NUPE

It would be nice to think that resolutional policies within the unions had led to an appreciable shift in basic attitudes (*NS* 3 May). That this is not so is less because of the failures of manual worker unions than the strengths of deep-rooted racism in Britain backed up by the establishment, the government, the media and the law.

As a NUPE member I am continually coming up against racism among fellow members, and against racism in the environment in which we live and work. Yet locally we have large numbers of black members and a fair representation among our elected stewards.

'F'off home, you black bastard' from the mouth of a five year old on the estate where I work as a council gardener shows how readily we hand on the infection. Wogs, Dagoes, Pakis, Frogs, Yids, Pats and Micks, Sheenies, Eyties, Jungle Bunnies and all the rest of them are not terms of endearment and say a lot about the depth of racism inherent in British society.

Ethnic monitoring, like all statistical material, can be subject to manipulation — we have already seen such abuse by the police of ethnic statistics. Yet, double-edged and clumsy though it may be, without the collection of information on all aspects of the physical results of discrimination it is hard to see how effective measures could be taken to do anything about it.

Hyprocrisy of 'nuclear family'

David Lowry, European Proliferation Information Centre, London N1

Whilst welcoming your articles by Rob Edwards and Paddy Ashdown on non-proliferation (*NS* 10 May), I would like to offer some corrections and further comment. Paddy Ashdown states it was Norman Dombey who recently unearthed the 1958 Congressional hearings on special US/UK co-operation on atomic energy. Dr Dombey has indeed written on this issue, but it was really Dr John Simpson of Southampton University who 'unpacked' and contextualised the hearings in his study *The Independent Nuclear State: The United States, Britain and the Military Atom* (Macmillan, 1983).

The important current political implications were made clear in the CND evidence at Sizewell last Autumn, especially in Dr Rob Hesketh's submission *Nuclear Power UK, Nuclear Weapons USA*, discussing the plutonium scrap deal that Rob Edwards has reported in the *NS* over the past couple of years. The pity of it is that the mainstream media has virtually ignored this politically 'hot' story, so much so that it is now under consideration by 'Project Censored' in the US as one of the ten most under-reported, but important stories of 1984.

It is worth noting the NPT Review Conference has been brought forward a week, to start 27 August, so that it will not overlap with the International Atomic Energy Agency arrival meeting, where delegates will no doubt praise nuclear safeguards and the prospects of further expansion.

It may be too much to ask that the UK NPT delegation express the same sentiments as M. J. Wilmshurst, currently heading the Foreign Office team at the International Atomic Energy Agency. He says in a chapter in a new book, *The International Nuclear Non-Proliferation System: Challenges and Choices*, published to inform the debate in the run up to the NPT Review Conference: 'Given the similarities in motivation between the (nuclear) weapon states and the potential (nuclear) weapon states, it is hard not to feel some sympathy with those who maintain that the non-proliferation policies of the weapon states are based on a hypocrisy in seeking to prevent others from acquiring what they themselves have acquired, even though these others may have the same reasons for wishing to acquire them.' Need one say any more?

CONTROVERSY

Legless on furniturism

WE THINK we ought to come clean. We ought to unveil the great terminological battle currently splitting the *New Statesman* — much as medieval Christendom split over that one word, whichever it was; the Pope will remember. For if we don't confess, the news of the schism is sure to seep out and we'll get trashed in the diary of the eponymous Peter Tory, or worse still in some popular such as the *Sunday Times*. Or in the *Spectator*, and so lose the good opinion of Colin Welch who only last month (27 April) praised, if we understood him correctly, the felicities of *NS* prose when compared to the ghastly *nouvelle fogue* of his own journal.

★ ★ ★

THE THING is — chairs. Those readers of the *NS* who go through each week's issue with a magnifying glass will have been growing uneasy about the way that we, or our contributors, variously refer to the *witas* (sexist Anglo-Saxon for 'wise men') who preside over 20th century *moots* (meetings) variously, and depending on gender, or rising above gender, as 'chairs', 'chairmen', 'chairwomen', or 'chairpersons'. Thus it might be, and it has been, a reference to 'Valerie Wise, *chair* of the GLC women's committee' (*NS* this issue p4); or to 'Jeremy Rowe, deputy chair*man* of Abbey National' (*NS* 17 May); or to 'CND chair*woman* Joan Ruddock' (*NS* 17 May again). Powerful feelings have swept the winds of Farringdon Lane. Should there be one usage? Whether ideologically or for ease of style, should there be a consistency? It almost went into the questionnaire.

★ ★ ★

ONCE UPON a time, of course, *chairman* raised no problem at all. So far from being persons given options for a day's work they were Hogarthian individuals who ran through the mud between the poles of sedan *chairs*. It was a muscular profession to which few if any women, it's to be hoped, were drawn. With the sedan chair, the chairmen, perhaps, should have died. But here we are in another world where a chairman may need enough strength to carry a motion, but certainly no more. Yet there are *chairmen* everywhere, from Andorra to Zaire; in the Chase Manhattan as in the Kremlin; at the top of Labour's NEC as in Beijing's late chairman Mao. Is it sexist to collude with institutions at least half of which never give a thought to the absence of women from seniority? Is it, worse or as bad, insensitive to reflowerings in language?

★ ★ ★

THE NEW STATESMAN (*sic* — yes!) is riven. There are those (names will be supplied in buff envelopes for a fiver) who hold that *chair* now suffices in all cases. An affirmative style by which the *NS* would breezily refer to (say) Sir Jeremy Morse as 'the chair of Lloyds Bank', though he calls himself the chairman, would be a tacit reproof to the absence of even one Lloyds plc woman director despite the vast number of women account-holders. Look at other elective, appointative, or hereditary offices, say the *chair* proponents: there are gender-unspecified terms. President, general secretary, governor, prime minister, monarch. Even bishop would serve. Delegate, councillor, mayor, editor. Of course there's 'Pope' (no 'Mome') and *Congressman* is a problem. But there's MP, chancellor, treasurer, captain. Why not simply *chair* (advantageous to headline-writing), which doesn't repeatedly infer that one occupation alone, chairing, witenagemooting, is most naturally male and only exceptionally female?

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BUT IF THERE are any who feel they've got a raised consciousness, and nod their heads at that, hold it! What, ask others embroiled in the *NS* style wars, is the use of imposing wholesale titles which would be imaginary, unused by those who hold them? Chair Mao? If Morse is to be 'chair of Lloyds Bank' and not 'chairman' as his company calls him, then should we have monarch, or perhaps sovereign, Elizabeth, not queen, and maybe peer Seear rather than baroness Seear? Seriously: *chair*, or even the longer *chairperson*, would be dogmatic and not descriptive, and therefore untruthful, say some individuals — not men alone — on staff. And what to do (*City Limits* once encountered this one) when Betty Lockwood insists as she does that she's chair*man* of the Equal Opportunities Commission and neither chairwoman, nor chairperson, nor chair? Send her off with a flea in her ear? But there does seem, says the still small voice, to be a *conservative* resistance to 'chair'. Was it not Emma Nicholson at the recent Tory women's conference who said on LBC (22 May) how grateful she was not to be introduced as a chair: 'I don't like being called a piece of furniture. Tory women don't get sat on'.

★ ★ ★

STRONG OPINIONS on a postcard please: *Furniturism*, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1. PS: me, I want to introduce the term *spoke*. As in, 'Bernard Ingham, spoke in the Downing St wheel, said last night. . .'

Andrew Lumsden

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A GOOD INVESTMENT

A baby of the Bulge and welfare state, CAROLYN STEEDMAN looks back on a childhood measured out in NHS orange juice, consumer goods and pleasures denied*

THE WAR WAS so palpable a presence in the first five years of my life that I still find it hard to believe that I didn't live through it. There were bombsites everywhere, prefabs on waste land, most things still rationed, my mother tearing up the ration book over my sister's pram outside the library in the High Road when meat came off points in the summer of 1951, a gesture that still fills me with the desire to do something so defiant and final; and then looking across the street at a woman wearing a full-skirted dress, and then down at the forties straight-skirted navy blue suit she was still wearing, and longing, irritatedly, for the New Look, and then at us, the two living barriers to twenty yards of cloth. Back home, she said, she'd be able to get it from the side door of the mill, but not here; not with you two . . . I was three in 1950, only twelve when the decade ended, just a child, a repository for other people's history; and my mother gave me her version long before my father did.

By the time my father could sit down with me in a pub, slightly drunk, tell me and my friends about Real Life, crack a joke about a Pakistani that silenced a whole table once, and talk about the farm labourer's — his grandfather's — journey up from Eye in Suffolk working on the building of the Great North Western Railway to Rawtenstall on the Lancashire-Yorkshire border, I was doing history at Sussex, and knew more than he did about the date and timing of journeys like that. My father, old but gritty, glamorous in the eyes of the class of '68, a South London wide boy with an authentic background, described his grandfather's funeral, about 1912, when a whole other family, wife, children, grandchildren, turned up out of the blue from somewhere further down the line where they'd been established on the navvy's journey north. (This was a circumstance paralleled at his own funeral, when the friends and relations of the woman he'd been living with for part of the week since the early 1960s stole the show from us, the pathetic huddle of the family of his middle years.)

Carolyn Steedman, above, and below with her mother. Even without the New Look coat 'she looked so much better than the other mothers around that I thought we had to be middle class'.

My mother's story on the other hand was told to me much earlier, in bits and pieces throughout the fifties, and it wasn't delivered to entertain but rather to teach me lessons. There was a child, an eleven-year-old from a farm seven miles south of Coventry, sent off to be a maid-of-all-work in a parsonage in Burnley. She had her tin trunk, and she cried, waiting on the platform, with her family seeing her off for the through train to Manchester. They'd sent her fare, the people in Burnley; 'but think how she felt, such a little girl, she was only eleven, with nothing but her little tin box. Oh she did cry.' I cry now over accounts of childhood like this, weeping furtively over the reports of nineteenth-century commissions of inquiry into child labour, abandoning myself to the luxuriance of grief in libraries, tears staining the pages where Mayhew's little watercress girl tells her story.

The lesson was, of course, that I must never, ever cry for myself, for I was a lucky little girl; my tears should be for all the strong, brave women who gave me life. This story, which embodied fierce resentment against the unfairness of things, was carried through seventy years and three generations, and all of them, all the good women, dissolved into the figure of my mother who was, as she told us, *a good mother*. She didn't go out drinking nor dancing; she didn't do as one mother she'd

This extract is taken from her chapter in Truth, Dare or Promise, Girls Growing Up in the Fifties, *edited by Liz Heron, to be published by Virago on 6 June.*

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known (in a story of maternal neglect that I remember feeling was over the top at the time) and tie a piece of string round my big toe, dangle it through the window and down the front of the house, so that the drunken mother, returning from her carousing, could tug at it, wake the child, get the front door opened and send it down the shop for a basin of pie and peas. I still put myself to sleep by thinking about *not* lying on a cold pavement covered with newspapers. She must have told me once that I was lucky to have a warm bed to lie in at night.

DURING THE post-war housing shortage my father got an office job with a property company, and the flat that went with it. I was born in March 1947, at the peak of the Bulge: more babies born that month then ever before or after, and carried through the terrible winter of 1946-47. We moved to Streatham Hill in June 1951, to an estate owned by the same company, later to be taken over by Lambeth Council. A few years later, my father got what he wanted, which was to be in charge of the company's boiler maintenance. On his death certificate it says 'heating engineer'.

In the 1950s my mother took in lodgers. Streatham Hill Theatre (now a bingo hall) was on the pre-West End circuit, and we had chorus girls staying with us for weeks at a time. I was woken up in the night sometimes, the spare bed in my room being made up for someone they'd met down the Club, the other lodger's room already occupied. I like the idea of being the daughter of a theatrical landlady, but this enterprise provides my most startling and problematic memories. Did the girl from Aberdeen really say, 'Och, no, not on the table!" as my father flattened a bluebottle with his hand, and did he *really* put down a newspaper on the same table to eat his breakfast? I feel a fraud, a bit-part player in a soft and southern version of *The Road To Wigan Pier*.

I remember incidents like these, I think, because I was about seven, the age at which children start to notice social detail and social distinction, but also more particularly because the long lesson in hatred for my father had begun, and the early stages were in the traditional mode, to be found in the opening chapters of *Sons and Lovers* and Lawrence's description of the inculcated dislike of Mr Morrell, of female loathing for coarse male habits. The newspaper on the table is problematic for me because it was problematic for my mother, a symbol of all she'd hoped to escape and all she'd landed herself in. (It was at this time, I think, that she told me that her own mother, means-tested in the late twenties, had won the sympathy of the relieving officer, who ignored the presence of the saleable piano because she kept a clean house, with a cloth on the table.)

BBC Hulton Picture Library

Above: children's clinic in 1956 and, below, free school dinners: visible state intervention in childhood, creating the belief that its beneficiaries have a right to the earth

Now, thirty years later, I feel a great regret for the father of my first four years, who took me out, and who probably loved me, irresponsibly ('it's all right for him; he doesn't have to look after you'), and I wish I could tell him now, even though he was, in my sister's words, a sod, that I'm sorry for my years of rejection and dislike. But we had to choose, early on, which side we belonged to, and children have to come down on the side that brings the food home and gets it on the table. By 1955 I was beginning to hate him — because *he* was to blame, for the lack of money, for my mother's terrible dissatisfaction at the way things were working out.

The new consumer goods came into the household slowly — because of *him*. We had the first fridge in our section of the street (he got it cheap — contacts) but were later to get a television. The vacuum cleaner was welcomed at first because it meant no longer having to do the stairs with a stiff brush. But in fact it added to my Saturday work because I was expected to clean more with the new machine. I enjoy shocking people by describing how goods were introduced into households under the guise of gifts for children: the fridge in the house of the children we played with over the road was given to the youngest as a birthday present — the last thing an eight-year-old wants. My mother laughed at this, scornfully; but in fact she gave us Christmas and birthday presents of clothes and shoes, and the record player came into the house in this way, as my eleventh birthday present. But I wasn't allowed to take it with me when I left; it wasn't really mine at all.

I remember walking up the hill from school with my mother after an open day, and asking her what class we were; or rather, I asked her if we were middle class, and she was evasive. She was smiling a pleased smile, and working things out; I think it must have been the afternoon (the only time she visited my primary school) she was told that I'd be going into the eleven-plus class and so (because everyone in the class passed the exam) would be going to grammar school. I was working out well, an investment with the promise

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of paying out. I answered my own question, and said that I thought we must be middle class, and reflected very precisely in that moment on my mother's black waisted coat with the astrakhan collar, and her high-heeled black suede shoes, her lipstick. She *looked* so much better than the fat, spreading South London mothers around us, that I thought we had to be middle class.

WHEN I CAME across Kathleen Woodward's *Jipping Street* I read it with the shocked amazement of one who had never seen what she knew written down before. Kathleen Woodward's mother of the 1890s was the one I knew: mothers were people who told you how long they were in labour with you, how much you hurt, how hard it was to have you ('twenty hours with you,' my mother frequently reminded me) and who told you to accept the impossible contradiction of being both desired and being a burden, and not to complain. This ungiving endurance is admired by working-class boys who grow up to write about their mothers' flinty courage. But the daughter's silence on this matter is a measure of the price you have to pay for survival. I don't think the baggage will ever lighten, for me or my sister. We were born, and had no choice in that matter; but we were burdens, expensive, never grateful enough. There was nothing we could do to pay back the debt of our existence. 'Never have children, dear,' she said. 'They ruin your life'.

Later, in 1977 after my father's death, we found out that they were never married, that we were illegitimate. In 1934 my father left his wife and two-year-old daughter in the north, and came to London. He and my mother had been together for at least ten years when I was born, and we think now that I was her hostage to fortune, the factor that might persuade him to get a divorce and marry her. But the ploy failed.

Just before my mother's death, playing around with the photographs on the bedroom mantlepiece, my niece discovered an old photograph underneath one of me at three. A woman holds a tiny baby. It's early 1930s, a picture of the half-sister, left behind. But I think I knew about her and her mother long before I looked them both in the face, or heard about their existence; knew that the half-understood adult conversations around me, the quarrels about 'her', the litany of 'she', 'she', 'she' from behind closed doors made the figure in the New Look coat, hurrying away, wearing the clothes my mother wanted to wear, angry with me yet nervously inviting me to follow, caught finally in the revolving door. We have proper birth certificates, because my mother must have told a simple lie to the registrar, a discovery about the verisimilitude of documents that worries me a lot as a historian.

MY MOTHER had wanted to marry a king. That was the best of my father's stories, told in the pub in the 1960s, of how difficult it had been to live with her in 1937, during the Abdication months. Mrs Simpson was no prettier than her, no more clever than her, no better than her. It wasn't fair that a king should give up his throne for her, and not for the weaver's daughter. From a traditional Labour background, my mother rejected the politics of solidarity and communality, always voted Conservative, for the left could not embody her desire for things to be *really* fair, for a full skirt that took twenty yards of cloth, for a half-timbered cottage in the country, for the prince who did not come. My childhood was the place where, for my mother, the fairy tales failed, and through the glass of that childhood I now see that failure as part of a longer and more enduring one.

The 1950s was a period when state intervention in childhood was highly visible. The calculated, dictated fairness that the ration book represented went on into the new decade, and when we moved from Hammersmith to Streatham Hill in 1951 there were medicine bottles or orange juice and jars of Virol to pick up from the baby clinic for my sister. This overt intervention in our lives was experienced by me as entirely beneficient, so I find it difficult to match an analysis of the welfare policies of the late forties which calls 'the post-war Labour government . . . the last and most glamorous flowering of late Victoria liberal philanthropy', which I know to be correct, with the sense of self that those policies imparted. If it had been only philanthropy, would it have felt like it did? I think I would be a very different person now if orange juice and milk and dinners at school hadn't told me, in a covert way, that I had a right to exist, was worth something.

My inheritance from those years is the belief, maintained with some difficulty, that I do have a right to the earth. I think had I grown up with my parents only twenty years before, I would not now believe this. For I was an episode in someone else's narrative, not my own person, my mother's child, and brought into being for a particular purpose. Being a child when the state was publicly engaged in making children healthy and literate was a support against my particular circumstances, its central benefit being that, unlike my mother, the state asked for nothing in return. Psychic structures are shaped by these huge historical labels: 'charity', 'philanthropy', 'state intervention'.

People said at the time that the war had been fought for the children, for a better future, and the 1950s represent a watershed in the historical process by which children have come to be thought of as repositories of hope, and objects of desire. Accounts like Jeremy Seabrook's in *Working Class Childhood* see in the material affection displayed towards children of our and more recent generations the roots of a political failure on the part of the labour movement to confront the inculcated desires of the market place. 'Instead of the children of the working class being subjected to rigorous self-denial in preparation for a life-time in mill or mine,' he writes, 'they have been offered instead the promise of the easy and immediate gratification which, in the end, can sabotage human development and achievement just as effectively as the poverty and hunger of the past'.

But in this sterner, older world, the iron entered into the children's soul, and many of them had to learn that being alive ought simply to be enough, a gift that must be ultimately paid for. Under conditions of material poverty the cost of most childhoods has been most precisely reckoned, and only life has been given freely. (One of the least attractive features of *Working Class Childhood* is its denial of the evidence it presents, its interpretations of people's consciousness of grim childhoods in terms of regret and loss.) After that initial investment, no one gave me and my sister anything. The landscape of feeling that this measured upbringing inculcated in countless children has yet to be surveyed; we should start, perhaps, with the burden of being good, and the painful watchful attention towards the needs of others rather than oneself.

I carry with me the tattered remnants of this psychic structure: there is no way of not working hard, nothing in the end but an endurance that will allow me to absorb everything by the way of difficulty, *holding on* to the grave. This psychology must have served capitalism at least as well as a desire for the things of the market. At least Jeremy Seabrook's cut-out cardboard teenage figures of abject horror and pity know, as they sit sniffing glue and planning how to knock off a video recorder, that the world owes them something, that they have a right to the earth, an attitude at least as subversive as the endurance that is the result of not being ever given very much. □

After her PhD thesis was rejected, Carolyn Steedman became a school teacher. Her thesis, Policing the Victorian Community, *was, in fact, published in 1984 a year after her book,* The Tidy House, *won the Fawcett Society Book Prize. Her next book,* Landscape for a Good Woman, *will be published by Virago in April 1986. Carolyn Steedman lectures at the University of Warwick in Arts Education.*

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Good grief

John Lucas reviews recent collections by Douglas Dunn and other poets

Elegies
DOUGLAS DUNN *Faber* £7.50 & £4
The Working of Water
PETER REDGROVE *Taxus* £2.95
The Man Named East and Other New Poems
PETER REDGROVE *Routledge* £4.95
The Young Pobble's Guide to His Toes
GAVIN EWART *Hutchinson* £5.95
Instant Chronicles: A Life
D. J. ENRIGHT *Oxford* £4.50
Poems 1963-1983
MICHAEL LONGLEY *Salamander* £9.95
Letters to W. H. Auden and Other Poems 1941-1984
CHARLES OSBORNE *Calder* £5.95

'THERE ARE a thousand plots in the narrative/In which grief is the hero.' These lines come from 'Stories', one of the poems in Douglas Dunn's new collection, and it's tempting to use them as a way into discussing the volume as whole. Yet to do so would be unfair because in fact grief isn't the hero of **Elegies**. Although all the poems are either directly or indirectly about Dunn's wife, dead from cancer at the age of 37, the volume as a whole doesn't settle for or into grief, and indeed when it does so it tends to be at its weakest, lapsing into the kinds of clichés ('unutterably feminine', 'it tore my heart out') which you might expect from the conventional approach that Dunn for the most part avoids. If *Elegies* is mostly free of sentimentality it's because Dunn manages to create, with a vivid exactness that is sometimes necessarily awkward, the life of a marriage and its aftermath.

Elegies has a minimal plot. It begins with a poem which deliberately negotiates memory of 'all our years', as that is called out by a fly discovered pressed in the poet's copy of Katherine Mansfield's *Bliss* ('one dry tear punctuating "Bliss"'), moves through his wife's illness, her death and his official registering of it and on through poems of memory, of anniversaries. The fact of death is terrible and final. 'Everyone receives this Certificate,' Dunn writes with dry, appalled wit in the poem 'Arrangements', and adds, 'You do not need even to deserve it'. And yet that isn't quite all.

> 'If only I could see our trees,' she'd say,
> Bed-bound up on our third floor's wintry height.
> 'Change round our things, if you should choose to stay.'
> I've left them as they were, in the leaf-light.
> ('*Birch Room*').

Implicit in the spoken words is the acceptance of mutability. But the closing foot, that subdued but firm spondee, gives to 'leaf-light' the feel of a delicately hazarded benison.

Other poems teem with remembered particulars or have about them an almost erotic gaiety, as for example, 'Dining': 'How well my lady used her knife and fork!/Happy together — ah, my lady loved to sport/And love.' Grief can become self-pity. What saves *Elegies* from the possibility of that is the felt presence of the person the poems are about and this seems to me most finely evoked in 'Land Love'. This poem runs the risk of sheltering behind Hardy's great ghost-love poems, but it finally emerges, I think, as a lovely, original achievement. 'We stood here in the coupledom of us.' Even that awkward first line feels right; it guarantees that the poem won't become 'literary' (although it can't entirely escape from Hardy's 'forms' or Eliot's 'presences'), so that the closing, singing lines are justified in their amplitude:

> Monogamous swans on the darkened mirrors
> Picture the private grace of man and wife
> In its white poise, its sleepy portraitures.
>
> Night is its Dog Star, its eyelet of grief
> A high, lit echo of the starry sheaves.
> A puff of hedge-dust loosens in the leaves.
> Such love that lingers on the fields of life!

I imagine that Peter Redgrove would find much to admire in *Elegies*, although his commitment to the life of things is less hesitant, more openly rapturous, than that of Dunn — or indeed any other contemporary poet on this side of the Atlantic. Of his two new volumes I prefer the very well produced **Working of Water**, perhaps because it's briefer than **The Man Named East**, which weighs in at getting on for 140 pages. Redgrove's energy and linguistic verve are remarkable; but I find his full-throttle ecstasy becomes exhausting after a while, a bit like having the Beatific Vision staring you full in the face for 24 hours a day: 'The dew, healing dew//Appears suddenly in its completed form/On all the grass-stems in the million meadows;//One who is everywhere must be joyous.' Well, if you say so, although the gap between this and the kind of fruit-juice mysticism that claims everything is a flower seems to me sometimes perilously narrow.

What saves Redgrove from the worst of such excesses is his genuinely comic, rumbustious manner, as in 'Butchers', which obviously invites comparison with Craig Raine's celebrated poem, but which works in an altogether broader way: 'It is asking for it to order a nice leg/Or chicken-breasts in the body shop;//They pinch it and wink, or what about this then Mam?/Slapping a sausage-length down [on?] the cold stone counter.' The gale of life blows high through Redgrove's poetry and this can be very exhilarating; but because

A statement of faith

George Cowley

Fuck the cold, impersonal universe;
Fuck cancer, violence and nuclear missiles;
Fuck coffins and crematoriums;
But I love Sally-Ann, aged eight.

She wears scruffy, ill-fitting, second-hand clothes,
Her face often wants a wash,
She sometimes swears like a navvy,
But she has beautiful eyes.

She recently said to me
'I'm *not* beautiful, I'm ugly,
Everybody says I'm ugly.'
Then she stole a shy, proud, 'can-it-be-true' glance in my mirror.

She is terrified of her mum's man-friend.
He told her mum that Sally-Ann was an animal.
Sally-Ann heard him say it.

She loves Timmy, aged twelve.
Timmy tells her that she is a slag.

When she comes to have tea with me on Sundays
She sings the words of the recent pop-song —
'I just called to say I love you.'
And the awful, awful, awful thing is,
She *means* it.

When I tease her
She laughs and calls me a 'thicko',
With love in her eyes.

Christ died in agony for little girls like Sally-Ann, aged eight.

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everything gets caught up in the general gusto poems often seem not much more than catalogues of an unstaunchable succession of lines:

> Our meridians or the invisible seams of our flesh
> Streaming with the aroused energies:
> How the clothes model the underneaths!
> The velvet jacket the relaxed skin,
> The silk shirt the inner glitter,
> The bunched tie a model of the puff
> Of perfume escaping into my face
> As I pull the loop and the masks collapse.

As it happens, that's where the poem stops. But, given Redgrove's way of working, poems usually do stop, rather than coming to an end.

Gavin Ewart's energy is almost as great as Redgrove's, although where Redgrove is a shaman Ewart is a showman, which my dictionary defines as 'a person skilled at presenting anything in an effective manner'. This is one reason for welcoming his work: he keeps alive a knowledge of and care for the varieties of poetic form, so that you can consult any of his volumes as though it's a technical handbook. Another reason for liking him is that he's usually on the side of decency. In **A Young Pobble's Guide** he has a poem, 'I. M. Anthony Blunt', in which he says, among other things, that 'It's sad/you were shaken by a maverick clever buccaneer like Guy./You had,/in one sense, a lot of genuine pressing thirties reason-why.' I fear the poem may not be memorable, but I hope I'm wrong, just as I hope his poem about the Falklands War and the foulness of the right-wing press lasts:

> Already men are drowning!
> We're brave, we have no fear,
> as patriots we're downing
> our fearless pints of beer.
> (*'"The Sun" Also Rises'*)

What on earth made him dream that he could be Poet Laureate?

Like Ewart, D. J. Enright is a sardonic moralist, although unlike Ewart he isn't much interested in formal matters. **Instant Chronicles** is, as with so much of his work, witty marginalia, no great shakes as verse, but making any number of points: 'Returning to your native shores, what is it/Hits you between the eyes? The amount of dog shit/In evidence. It may be heaven, it may be hell —/One thing's certain: pets are used to eating well.'

Michael Longley is a far superior craftsman and he has been very well served by the Salamander Press, whose impeccably lovely edition of his **Poems** is not only a joy to possess but acts as a reproof to other publishers of poetry. If Salamander can do it why can't *they*? As to the poems themselves: Longley's first volume, *No Continuing City*, still reads well. Full of young man's lyricism, but then why not? Besides, the poems are shapely and at their best genuinely inventive. Even so, there is about the volume a failure of imaginative nerve, which masquerades as fastidiousness, at its most debilitating in the short sequence 'Words for Jazz Perhaps' (the coy post-Movement wit of the elegy to Fats Waller is particularly irritating); and which infects the following volumes, all of which seem to me fatally dull. They are characterised by the air of fastidiousness without it ever becoming apparent what the fastidiousness is for. When Longley takes himself seriously as an Irish poet (as in 'Wounds' — which is about Belfast killings) you are reminded of how much better Tom Paulin writes such poems. And when he says in a poem to Derek Mahon that 'Our matches struck on crumbling walls/To light us as we moved at last/Through the back alleys of Belfast', I am struck by the cliché of 'those crumbling walls', and want to protest that neither in this or in any other poem *does* Longley move into the back alleys. (And it's certainly not where you expect to find Mahon, for he explicitly rejects 'a world of/Sirens, bin-lids/And bricked-up windows'). In addition, the Tom Moore sing-along rhyme on 'last/Belfast' feels altogether wrong. However, against all this I should say that some recent poems seem much better, and the love poem 'Light Behind the Rain' is excellent: not simple, but certainly sensuous and passionate.

Charles Osborne's 'Letter to W. H. Auden' ends with two good lines. They are the lines with which Auden ended his wonderful 'Letter to Lord Byron'. This apart, Osborne's poem is such self-regarding, incompetent drivel that you wonder how it found a publisher. I counted at least 11 occasions on which the word 'quite' is used as a filler ('quite calm', 'quite a cosy deal'), the rhyming is atrocious and Osborne's attempts to honour metre are so inept that I began to wonder whether the whole thing wasn't meant as a Henry Gowan-like joke against those who think poetry matters. But then the rest of the volume is no better and at times it's even worse. And to think that he's Literature Director of the Arts Council! Truly, the ways of the English are strange. □

Imagine my mother dancing

Alan Jenkins

or stopping in the nursery late at night.
She will appear in pearls and a new fur,
a cloud of perfume and a burst of light
from a diamond hair-clip. That's her,
pouring cocktails from a silver shaker
into a glass like an upturned parasol, glancing
at Daddy. Imagine her dancing,
looking over someone's shoulder for a sign
from him — that he's watching her, that he thinks
she's beautiful. . .How her eyes shine,
something to do with all those drinks,
with memory. Stubbing cigarettes in the sand,
pursing her lips for her lipstick/mirror, taking my hand
and drawing me to her suddenly in a crowd
out shopping one afternoon, laughing too loud
at Daddy's jokes. *Imagine my mother dancing.*

Title and words in italics from Joan Didion's *Democracy*

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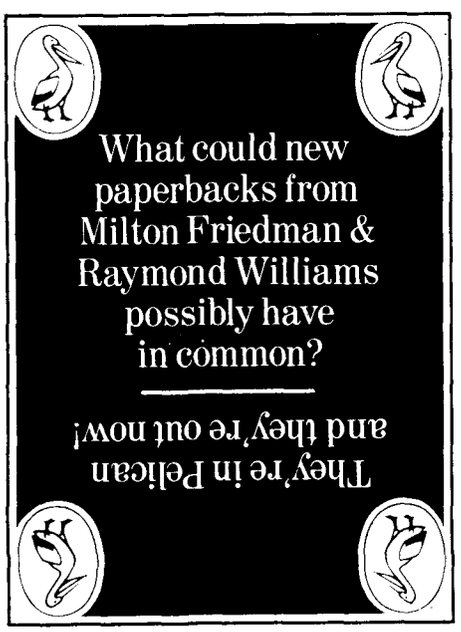
Jumping out of line

Jeremy Silver writes in praise of performance poetry

IN A *New Society* article last year (7 June 1984) Blake Morrison proclaimed 'Suddenly Poetry Is News' and he was almost right. Poetry in performance (if less so in print) has emerged in the last couple of years as a highly popular, accessible and dynamic medium. From the struggles of the Women's Movement, out of increased assertiveness of cultural expressions in ethnic minorities, intensified activity in the Green movements and because of high unemployment, poetry has emerged as a very direct form for communication of radical ideas.

Yet astonishingly Morrison went on to declare 'if there is excitement that something is "happening" in poetry, it stems not from the poetry written by and for the young (and old) unemployed, but from the poets disseminated by established publishers like Faber, Penguin and Oxford University Press'. While he made passing reference to 'ranters, ravers, punks and reggae-men' (no women, note) his discussion revolved around praise of Craig Raine and James Fenton in whose work, among others, he sees the beginnings of a 'humane morality', the proud portrayal of 'an England we can recognise'. Morrison might earn an MBE for his efforts, but an all-white, all-male England is not one which many people would recognise (except perhaps in the aspirations of right-wing politicians). It hardly characterises the kind of society out of which many performance poets write. Fredrick Williams is more accurate in his poem 'Babylon A Turn De Screw':

> Babylon a turn de screw
> Papa get de sack
> No wok, no pay
> An dole money nah nuff
> Mama a feel de shack.


What could new paperbacks from Milton Friedman & Raymond Williams possibly have in common?
They're in Pelican and they're out now!

Ghost trains

Fiona Pitt-Kethley

I flirted with horror on ghost trains,
relishing the caresses of cobwebs,
laughing through electronic screams.

How individual each man's view of fear —
the plastic skeletons at every turn,
lions painted on double swinging doors,
(once even, a plastic girl in bra and pants,
a skull beneath her wig when she swung round).

The catharsis of terror is over
so quickly — not spun out like life. You come
to light from darkness, walk even ground
after the Crazy House's corridors
and tilted spongy floors.

Performance has emerged over the last five years, despite virtually no 'serious' media coverage, as the leading form in which poetry communicates with a wide range of people. The strategic 'noise' of punk and rant has made available and validated a new space in which more complex voices can be heard. It is audiences who have been learning to listen, as much as poets to write material that goes way beyond mere agitprop. It is worth noting, of course, that yesterday's agitprop is tomorrow's trendy art form. But the old myth is now good and dead that performance of poetry can succeed only with work in a strictly oral tradition.

Nor is it simply the conventional clubs, pubs and cabarets that are venues for poetry in performance. Virtually every lively community or literature festival in the country is crying out for new poets to appear on the bill. Organising groups like Apples & Snakes or Angels of Fire in London or Stand & Deliver in Manchester provide a network through which new performers reach a wide audience remarkably quickly and certainly before many appear in print.

The Sixties poetry boom saw writing tripped out on solipsistic celebrations of liberation, but it was a freedom so hallucinatory and ultimately so discriminatory that it actually 'released' very few people. This condition of exclusion still exists widely. The world of poetry publishing (like everywhere else) is familiarly dominated by the white male academic, but it is now being challenged hard from the outside. The powerful movements to validate different cultural identities in the ethnic minorities, among feminists and in other movements for change have always met with resistance. But in expressing the anger of rejection and in casting off stereotypes, something new emerges. As Grace Nichols puts it:

> still there ain't no
> easy belly category
> for a black woman
> words billow themselves
> out of shape, double-axed
> and double-edged.
>
> (*from 'Maybe This Poem'*)

The effect of poetry performances is to change the way in which people engage with poetry and the way in which it is written. For poets who perform frequently the printed form is really only secondary to the performance — and the nature of a text changes as a result. The presence of the poet, the inflections and emphasis of his or her language, music and movement remain in the print. Reading is no longer only a matter of putting your own voice into the words, it is now also a retrieval or recollection of the performance.

Collaboration with actors, dancers, musicians is more and more common too. A piece performed at the recent Angels of Fire Radical Poetry Festival exemplifies this. 'Dick and Jane Books' by Patricia Bardi and Chris Cheek explores the stifling effects of a conventional 'close' relationship using dance, bursts of pop song, raw sounds and poetry to stunning innovative effect. The text of the poem approaches the status of a score, it becomes fluid and a part of the whole artistic, political process in which the writers are at work — no longer to be read as a closed aesthetic object.

As Peter Finch points out in a new book *How To Publish Your Poetry* (Allison & Busby, £2.95) in the Seventies 'it had become more popular to write poetry than to read it'. In the mid-Eighties going to see poetry performed is probably as popular as writing it. It is certainly less appropriate to read a book of poems than to go and listen to a recording of a performance, for example at the National Sound Archive where there is an unparalleled collection of contemporary poetry in performance — much of it unpublished.

All of this has its effect on the writers too. A new energy enters poetry when performance-influences, for example from reggae and dub or from colloquial speech, merge with self-conscious textual forms:

> Nobody knows what I'd be like if I let go.
> I don't know what I'd be like if I let go,

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but I believe it would be good,
one good, one good, but I don't know,
and I watch out for raised eyebrows,
for that could be fear of what I do,
and I watch out for lowered eyebrows,
for that could be to block out my light,
to see only one thing, not my thing
(*Christopher Cardale from 'One Foot'*)

Poetry in the context of performance rarely loses complexity or substance. It is a familiar but fallacious argument that if the poetry is written with performance in mind then it cannot work in print. Emerging more and more clearly is the tremendous positive effect widespread performances are having on the whole notion of writing, reading and participating in poetry. If you haven't been to a poetry performance recently, then put down the remote control box for the TV and go now. □

Not venturing abroad

Robert Sheppard writes about recent anthologies

The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Women Poets
ed. JENI COUZYN *Bloodaxe* £12.95 & £5.95
Making for the Open: The Chatto Book of Post-Feminist Poetry 1964-1984
ed. CAROL RUMENS *Chatto* £4.95
Poetry Introduction 6 *Faber* £3.95
The Gregory Poems 1983-84
ed. JOHN FULLER and HOWARD SERGEANT
Salamander, Edinburgh, for The Society of Authors £2.95

CAN WE YET SPEAK of 'post-feminist poetry'? Carol Rumens, editor of the wide-ranging anthology **Making for the Open,** clearly thinks we can. Her introduction confidently rejects propagandist women's verse ('the noisy amateurs') in favour of work by women who — over the past two decades — have developed literary technique as well as authenticity of being. Jeni Couzyn is less sanguine. The 11 poets she marshals in **The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Women Poets** are prefaced by a fighting introduction that traces a literary history of male repression which has only just begun to change. More contentiously, she is unequivocal about one major existential choice facing a woman poet: she must avoid marriage at all costs. Most of the writers provide their own interesting introductions (complete with photographs in this handsome edition) which often reveal a less absolutist approach to the choice between the 'perfection of the life or of the work' — although the choice is never easy.

Of the older writers in *The Bloodaxe Book*, I am still not convinced — despite a good case for it — that Stevie Smith's poetry is more than doggerel with a streak of nihilism, or that Kathleen Raine's metaphysical lyricism amounts to much more than recycled Blake. Denise Levertov and Sylvia Plath are, to my mind, the greatest of these poets. Couzyn has selected sensitively from Plath's work and has avoided most of the texts which use contemporary social atrocities as metaphors of personal suffering. Death is a persistent theme in the anthology, but only in Plath's 'Edge' is death the image of perfect extinction: the end of emotion. Although Plath could also write sardonically of marriage, in 'The Applicant' ('It can sew, it can cook,/It can talk, talk, talk'), Levertov writes more convincingly of 'the ache of marriage'. Levertov's range is wider; the insanity of warfare is confronted and accommodated in a way Plath never managed: 'How can we live with this fear? says one./From day to day, says another'.

It is good to see women poets liberated from their usual literary contexts: Levertov and Elizabeth Jennings, for example, no longer have to carry the phallocentric labels of 'Black Mountain' and 'Movement' verse. But there is a concomitant loss. Although these two write from a common gender position, questions of

Sprinters

John Levett

It is spring and the sprinters are out again.
From my window I watch them sample the grass,
Neurotically stepping as though to contain
Whatever it is that makes people fast,
And limbering over the asphalt square
And rocking from foot to colourful foot,
Obsessed with speed, or at least the idea
Of speed's unachievable absolute.
To be honest, they're not really very good,
They are ragged, critically overweight,
And when they start trying their actions are crude,
Their expressions a little too desperate,
And something about them, perhaps this vain,
This repeated, impulsive attempt at speed,
Is suggestive, now it is spring again,
Of all clumsily handled need.

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aesthetic orientation are largely ignored. (Couzyn believes it is the *content*, not the form, of women's writing that has led men to suppress it.) What does unite many of the poets is their use of supernatural or mythical characters and personae: Smith and Raine's Muse and Daimon, Plath's Ariel, Ruth Fainlight's Sybil, Fleur Adcock's vampire and Elaine Feinstein's witches:

> Listen, I shall have to whisper it
> into your heart directly: we are all
> supernatural/every day
> we rise new creatures/cannot be predicted

These figures offer themselves, perhaps, as harbingers of occult or subversive knowledge that threatens to undermine the world of social reality: the realm of masculine domination. It is strange, then, that Jenny Joseph, Fainlight, Adcock and Anne Stevenson should retain the social empiricism of the Movement poets of the Fifties: 'Stepping down from the blackberry bushes/he stands in my path: Bogyman.' (Adcock, 'Bogyman'). Might it not be a political and aesthetic necessity for women poets to avoid this particular stylistic bogyman? Another form of subversion might involve the disruption of (male) discourse, through formal experiment (and Feinstein's rhythmic lineation points towards this).

The first 50 pages of Rumens's anthology are not much fun, because it is here one finds the heaviest concentration of that post-Movement verse: Stevenson and Adcock again, plus Patricia Beer and others. But the first translation, of Pole Anna Swirszczynska, hit me like a breath of fresh air. The non-Britons, ranging from the Soviet Gorbanevskaya, to the American Adrienne Rich (*post*-feminist?); from the austere prose-poetry of Sarah Kirsch to the political realism of Carolyn Forché; from Elizabeth Bishop's lengthy and haunting narrative, 'The Moose', to Eunice deSouza's keen satire on Indian sexism — all of these exhibit a range of technique and sensibility that is exhilarating to read. We must thank Rumens for bringing them into the open.

It is not only *women* British poets who are unadventurous as Faber's latest **Poetry Introduction** will confirm. Despite editorial claims for the poets' 'intelligence and perception', the poems are mostly dull in that British way: wistfully looking out of the window, relating domestic events with precision, going to the seaside; but with very little to say. Admittedly, S.E.G. Curtis does assimilate Larkin's satirical mode, but his targets (chic radicalism: 'Deschool the kids, make love, not war') are easy and *passé*. Only Alan Dewar, who approaches the poetic objectivity of Charles Tomlinson, rejects the social for the perceptual. **The Gregory Poems** is offered as an exercise in futurology but, rather than its displaying the embryonic major poets of 20 years hence, I fear most of its poets have tailored their talents to the post-Movement present, and will look rather dated. The best poet is Carol Ann Duffy who writes unfalteringly of a mother's loss of identity: *'You open your dead eyes to look in the mirror/which they are holding to your mouth.'* The way to get a Gregory *Award*, it seems, is to be under 30, to provide poems with epigraphs from Eliot, Frost or — worse — Anthony Thwaite (one of the judges), and to write like this: 'Our frisbee wavers on its yellow course/From hand to hand across the park. I think/"How solitary we are".' (Michael O'Neill, 'Recreation') If *this* is representative of 'my generation', then count me out. □

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Michael Hofmann

Like a man pleading for his life,
you put novels between yourself
and your pursuers — Atalanta,
always one step ahead of the game.

You gave me a copy of your second
with the dedication: *Michael,*
something else for you to read.
Your disparaging imperative

was too much resented for obedience. . .
You were a late starter at fiction,
but for ten years now, your family
has been kept at arm's length.

— We are as the warts on your elbows,
scratched into submission, but always
recrudescent. You call each of us
child, your wife and four children,

three of them grown-up. You have
the biblical manner: the indulgent patriarch,
his abused, endless patience; smiling
the absent smile of inattention. . .

Everything you need is at your desk:
glue-stained typewriter, match-sticks,
unravelled paper-clips — *Struwwelpeter* props!
With your big work-scissors, you snipe

at your nails, making the sparks fly.
The radio updates its bulletins
every hour, guarding you against surprises.
The living breath of the contemporary. . .

Once, you acceded to conversation,
got up to put on your black armband
and took your blood-pressure, as though
in the presence of an unacceptable risk.

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FICTION

Nightmares

John Clute

Victory Over Japan
ELLEN GILCHRIST *Faber* £9.95
Suspects
DAVID THOMSON *Secker* £8.95
Fiskadoro
DENIS JOHNSON *Hogarth* £9.50
No Word of Love
A.L. BARKER *Hogarth* £9.50

AS THE MILLENNIUM slips closer, like an answer to questions we never wished to ask, the need to grapple with the problem of America does not seem to slacken. A. L. Barker may fish delicately in still waters, as she has done with great success for four decades, but the other writers on review might seem barely in control of their material were it not kept in mind that the Americas they've created are worlds at the very edge of the abyss.

In **Victory Over Japan**, which has won the 1984 American Book Award, Ellen Gilchrist gives us a second collection of tales set in the Deep South of America and dealing with rich folk. Most of her protagonists are women and, taken separately, most of the stories slide at points into the nagging coercive sentimentality characteristic of books whose authors identify too closely with their characters, and who demand the same surrender from the reader. Mulcted of personhood by husbands or fathers or lovers almost uniformly malignant, Gilchrist's insistently zany protagonists careen into bars, beds, drugs, hospitals, marriages; into every kind of spiritual desert money can buy. The effect is flamboyant, meretricious and contaminating. But only at first.

Like a tone-row in music, almost never uttered outright but shaping every passage, the title of the collection tells a secret tale that binds each story into a coherent, singularly devastated vision of contemporary life. The America that won victory over Japan — the title seems to insist — has become a distended wasteland where individual souls, like those of Gilchrist's incarcerated women, die in the vacuum. The book closes with a fierce vignette whose message echoes backwards through each story. Rich loony Crystal, whose brother and husband have slowly denatured her over the years, tells her black maid Traceleen a tale of her childhood, from about the time Japan was defeated. Her brother has built an aeroplane in the living room. To get a chance to play with it herself, she must give him in trade everything she holds dear. She gets behind the cardboard wheel of that symbol of justice and might:

> 'I put my feet down on the pedals. They were two old shoeboxes with cardboard springs. Traceleen,' she said. Her voice was rising. 'Traceleen, are you listening? Can you hear me? This is everything I know about love I'm telling you. Everything I know about everything.'

The idea behind **Suspects** is so genuinely brilliant that it would be churlish to wish someone else had come up with it, and had known enough about the American film to bring it off. All the same, clear-headed and articulate and acute though he may be, as a writer of fiction David Thomson can fall into a near-fatal flatness of tone and pace.

Suspects is structured as a series of short biographies. The first is of Jake Gittes, who was played by Jack Nicholson in Roman Polanski's *Chinatown* (1974). Born in a whorehouse in 1901, helplessly vulnerable to women under his shaky veneer of toughness, Gittes becomes embroiled with the sinister Noah Cross and his daughter Evelyn in the 1930s; he never really recovers from the experience, and is last heard of in Saigon, in 1971. The second biography is of Noah Cross (1870-1972) who, through his long life, remains an object of obsessive inquiry for the narrator of the book. There are something like 85 biographies in all.

Each character is from the American film, either from *films noirs* of the 1940s like *Double Indemnity* or *Laura* or *Casablanca*, or from their spiritual offspring of the 1970s and later, movies like *Chinatown* or *Night Moves* or *Body Heat*. Each biography darkens the implications of the book, until America becomes indeed a *film noir*, paralysed by plots and obsessions, hurtling towards the abyss.

The final coup is also brilliant. We learn that the narrator is George Bailey (James Stewart in *It's a Wonderful Life*). But the film got him wrong. Instead of being allowed to recognise his life as integral to a vision of pastoral America, the 'real' George Bailey goes not to Heaven in 1946 but to New York, where he sleeps with Laura Hunt (Gene Tierney in *Laura*), and the children of his loins have populated the darkest films of the 1970s. It is a savage revenge on Frank Capra, and on the American dream as Hollywood saw it.

In **Fiskadoro**, Denis Johnson's second novel, the apocalypse has already occurred. There has been a nuclear war. Eighty years have passed. In Key West, Florida, something like civilisation survives in the shambles, though entropy gnaws at all knowledge and all artifacts, and universal darkness will, for millennia, supervene. It is a theme familiar to science fiction, and Johnson sensibly attempts no formal innovations.

Except in one significant respect. The oldest inhabitant is a survivor of the fall of Saigon in 1975. Her memories of that horror, and of the horror of Viet Nam, markedly deepen the sense of desolation of Johnson's imagined future; but the interplay works both ways. Strangely, *Fiskadoro* brings Viet Nam home to us. It is as though Viet Nam were one side of an equation that required, for its companion, not the *film-noir* nightmares of contemporary America but the other side of Apocalypse.

It is something of a pleasure to return to the stories of A. L. Barker in England, though we do find, within the stable contours of her chaste suburbs, decorous turmoils of the heart. Her protagonists do not flail about, nor does the panic of their solitude turn to ruined flamboyance, or acts of terror, or threaten the end of the world. But she is a frightening writer all the same. In the frozen lives of which she tells in **No Word of Love**, the slightest movement can cause the greatest anguish. Darkness can fall very softly. □

ART

Gilt-framed

John Spurling

Francis Bacon
Tate

IN VELÁSQUEZ'S portrait of Pope Innocent X, the Pope is holding in his left hand a petition addressed to him and signed by the artist. Velásquez wanted to be ennobled and the Pope did indeed make representations to the King of Spain on his behalf. Francis Bacon's study after this portrait, painted in 1953, turns the Pope's throne into a golden playpen, partly sinks the top half of the figure into the background drapes, so that Innocent becomes a sort of ghostly Polonius in the arras, adds a large pair of spectacles (which belong to El Greco's earlier portrait of Cardinal Guevara rather than to Velásquez's Pope) and opens his mouth in a scream. The petition for ennoblement is of course omitted, yet this deliberate guying of an august and authoritarian figure was just as surely Bacon's path to ennoblement as it would have been Velásquez's road to ruin.

Bacon's success with the arbiters of taste of the post-Second World War era has been based

Self-portrait 1970 (detail)

firmly on a fashionably outrageous reversal of Renaissance figurative virtues (nobility, upstandingness, sensitivity, sympathy, physical grace, etc.) together with a reassuring adherence to traditional craft. In fact, of course, he did not so much reverse the virtues as re-locate them: nobility in solipsism instead of social hierarchy, upstandingness in the posture of the ape or the carcase, sensitivity and sympathy in abasement, grace in foreshortened distortion. The cant word which covered all this readjustment — the 20th century's characteristic reaction to the 19th century's shattered ideals of Progress — was 'humanity' or 'the human predicament' and under this citation Bacon has been duly ennobled.

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Introducing this retrospective, both the Minister for the Arts and the Director of the Tate have awarded him the title of the greatest living painter and the latter adds that his paintings can 'hang naturally in our museums beside those of Rembrandt and Van Gogh'.

But, in spite of the fact that so many of them are conveniently mounted in large gilt frames, I do not think they can. The reason is not the subject-matter itself, but Bacon's inability to transform it from a mere reversal or denial of the virtues of another age into an affirmation of a world and a way of looking which would be at least as complete and convincing as the one they seek to replace. All the greatest artists, including Rembrandt and Van Gogh, have achieved this and Bacon, at the time he was engaged with his screaming Pope and other related subjects, might perhaps have gone on to do so, just as Mondrian, after struggling with monstrous windmills and apocalyptic sunsets, and Matisse, with contorted nudes and feverish colours, broke through at last to new pictorial worlds where they did not have to do constant battle with the past.

The earliest work in this retrospective, dating from the Forties and Fifties, is exciting and energetic. Bacon's struggle with figurative tradition takes place all over the ring and involves the setting and costume as much as the protagonist. Opening his figures' mouths and highlighting the teeth is, as Dawn Ades points out in her catalogue essay, one important and telling tactic in his attempt to stress his figures' animality but so is the way they are imprisoned in their pictorial space, not just by lines and bars but also by being absorbed into the texture, so that they seem emanations of the settings they occupy, ghosts in the curtains, wild things (both frightened and frightening) in their own shadowy habitats. In *Figure Study II* of 1945-6, the kneeling woman (if it is a woman) is little more than a bare shoulder and open mouth snarling and cornered behind a coat, an open umbrella and a potted palm. In *Figure Study I*, with the same glaring orange background, there is no visible creature: a man's hat, a heavy tweed overcoat and a flower arrangement provide such complete concealment that we can only guess whether the thing inside is alive, dead, or has been scooped out altogether.

The series of Popes is paralleled by a set of modern authoritarian heads and figures in suits — thin and wolfish with short hair and insistent teeth — suggesting international executives, American senators or German war-criminals; and by some particularly disturbed-looking monkeys in cages. The prevailing colours are blue, black and brown, while blurs, shadows and linear barricades convey a sense of tightly bounded ferocity. In among these images of solo aggression and defence are three violent versions of the sexual act in which pairs of naked figures of indeterminate sex struggle together on a patch of waste grass or a rumpled bed.

The only painting in these first galleries which lacks energy and conviction is the earliest — the triptych called *Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion*, painted in 1944. Its sculptural, semi-abstract figures, partly indebted to Picasso and distinctly akin to some of Sutherland's work, are set forward in a clear, overall light against a flat, coloured background and look

Bacon's screaming Pope (detail)

like second-hand, short-hand symbols of anguish, ideas left over from surrealism or the literary drama of the Thirties. Unfortunately, when Bacon moved into what one might call his 'gilt-edged' period of the Sixties and onwards he fell back increasingly on the static, arm's length manner of this piece, especially when tackling an ambitious subject on a large scale. His interest in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, from which these vaguely mythical figures of the Forties derive and which is the explicit subject of a triptych painted in 1981, definitely seems to have damaged Bacon's artistic health, encouraging him to go in for an elegant form of Grand Guignol, whose mildly titillating *frissons* are as false to Aeschylus, that rugged and sensitive moralist, as they are to Bacon's own best instincts.

Aeschylus, however, was the symptom not the cause. With the advent of the gilt frames Bacon gave up the struggle to remake the world in a new image. He settled for the partial gain of his intense fascination with the human body, naked and exposed to the light, bunched up tightly like a sausage within the stocking of its own skin, but otherwise as vulnerable as a snail picked out of its shell and, in the end, as purposeless and as constricting for an artist with serious pretensions. Discovering no context, no mental or physical place beyond the focus of his microscope where these mollusc-humans, stripped of their coverings and concealments, could be, he filled in the spaces round them with the blandest sort of designer's decor, neat arrangements of lines and perspectives, soft curves, expanses of seductive colour and the odd piece of fashion furniture. Remove the molluscs, as Bacon himself does occasionally, and nothing but tasteful vacancy remains.

And as time goes on the vacancy invades even the figures, so that they seem no longer even intensely observed or specific, but merely skilfully executed and patented, Baconian trademarks, signatures more than explorations. In fact Bacon's attention shifts mainly to portraiture and his old energy flashes out intermittently when he engages with his own face or that of a close friend. Perhaps the most appealing painting in the exhibition is a full-length, seated self-portrait of 1970 in which the artist, draped in a wonderfully sharp raincoat, contemplates the high curve of his crossed leg and the swing of his snugly-fitted shoe. It is a far cry from the ghosts and monsters of the early rooms, but at least it is true to its subject. For Bacon, when he failed to break through to a new world, relapsed into mannerism — 'excessive or affected addiction to a distinctive manner', as the Oxford Dictionary defines it — and it is only in the self-portraits, and particularly this one, that he seems to recognise what happened and to find it funny as well as sad. □

DANCE

Songs of praise

Stephanie Jordan

Merce Cunningham Dance Company
Sadler's Wells

WRITING OF New York City Ballet in 1983, I referred to a pressure of information and a flow of imagination comparable only to the repertory of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Now that the Cunningham Company is here again, I can only rephrase the assertion that no programme nor season seen since then contains anywhere near such a standard of invention. Judging from the reception, London greedily devoured all it could from the current visit, the repertoire containing seven works new to us.

Not in more than a decade has the 15-strong company looked so beautiful. There have been complaints of an assertive individualism lost during the Seventies but in the 1980 and '81 London visits the work was admirable for its fleet, meticulous renderings of abstract complexity and rhythmic surprise, marvellous for its sheer ambition. Now we are moved by an added dimension describable only as atmosphere and dramatic potential, an effect achieved by the very sparest means. I suspected, and others longer acquainted with his work have confirmed, that this element was a component of Cunningham's earlier work, developed now in quite a different way. Perhaps it is because Cunningham is extending beyond his basic vocabulary, affording each piece a particular gestural content, the manner in which the dancers interrelate or the relationship of the dancer Cunningham himself to his company. There is still no clear narrative. The

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movement functions abstractly and it is now well known that Cunningham's application of chance method to choreography and the lack of consultation between choreographer, composer and designer is as liable to upset as it is to support the 'meaning' of phrases as they first emerge in the studio. Yet, there is the irony that the work can contain within it such possibility to be read, such tantalising opportunities for images, stories and situations, such a wealth of implications and confusions.

In **Quartet**, all elements conspire to create a threatening situation: David Tudor's restless score, sombre costumes and lighting by Mark Lancaster; the casting for four (the quartet) plus an outsider, Cunningham; the large gusts of movement, swooping, hovering bird-of-prey images and sudden freezes. Unlike in other pieces seen, Cunningham is on stage throughout, shadowing and framing the dancers, arms fluttering, briefly swept along in their tide, beaten back, stumbling, advancing and retreating, never belonging. He leaves; the quartet continues without him. The work could be valedictory and personal: the 66-year-old choreographer and his young company. Or it could be the creator in detached awe of the power and independence of those whom he has made.

Pictures is by far the slowest of recent Cunningham pieces, inviting contemplation, coloured by the mock-*raga* drones and sighings of David Behrman's *Interspecies Smalltalk* and the quiet blue and black leotards and tights. The dance is based on a series of tableaux and a number of simple transition steps. All tableaux but one differ, most set across the stage, some silhouetted by a dramatic lighting change, all of them with motion contained, dancers making a chain, one pulling away from another, one bowing down with the energy while the other reaches ecstatically up and over backwards. A surprising sensuality is achieved in such a framework, far more than the title suggests. Early comers leave and latecomers arrive; last is Merce, alone at the conclusion, a girl lying peacefully or, perhaps, like a corpse across his arms.

Native Green, a world premiere, was another surprise, Cunningham's big experiment with *port de bras* and upper body movement. Arms and body are no longer definitely placed but ripple and tremble, the head and wrist movements florid and abandoned. It is a busy and excitable piece for three couples. None is offstage for long and there is never a moment of complete stillness; the energy is electric. John King's score is nervous, using a prepared violin like the throbbing of an oriental ensemble. For the final moment, the dancers pick up William Anastasi's length of tubing, curvaceous like their movement. They cling to it in an eternal rocking motion.

To say that other works in the repertory were less surprising is not to suggest that they were less enjoyable. Of the new pieces, **Doubles, Trails** and **Phrases** display all the characteristics that mark Cunningham at his best, constantly rejuvenating himself. As a performer, although standing out in age from his company, he needs no apology. When on stage, he is the one you watch, with the swiftest, most sharply arrested arms that you are ever likely to see, and vital in stillness. Only in *Quartet* does he appear estranged from his company and, even here, it is to a purpose. No other Western dancer/choreographer has used age to such advantage. So great is his desire to participate that he has discovered ways of putting to use his comparative frailty. Without his presence, the pieces are unimaginable.

Nor has anybody else created so broad and original a vocabulary, establishing his own conventions and then revitalising them, balancing the stability of a style against whim and fancy, everyday or even odd or sentimental behaviour.

Part of the confidence of the repertoire results from Cunningham's thorough preparation of his dancers in this vocabulary. There is much that you can enjoy about them collectively: their physical skill, their boldness with their weight, the security of their landings and their clean, clipped shapes, their modest intensity and understatement in extreme circumstances. Yet they also emerge strongly as individuals. There are insufficient superlatives for such a company. □

NOTE: Poems to be considered for publication should be addressed to Poetry Editor Hugo Williams at the NS. They, like other unsolicited manuscripts, can be returned only if a stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed.

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FIVE PEACE POEMS by Oliver Bernard, foreword by Tony Benn, ready 21 June from Five Seasons Press, Madley, Hereford, HR2 9NZ. Cover price £1.50.

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THEATRE

Burning glass

Benedict Nightingale

In the Belly of the Beast
Lyric Studio, Hammersmith
Susan's Breasts
JONATHAN GEMS *Theatre Upstairs*
The Glass Menagerie
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS *Greenwich*

CONFRONTED as we so frequently are with atrocities onstage — an eye gouged out here, a baby stoned to death there — we critics are apt to become hardened, blasé and, one fears, unresponsive. It takes a lot to stop us primly intellectualising and start feeling as lay people feel, wince as they wince. But the three-man Wisdom Bridge company from Chicago left this reviewer, for one, more drastically churned than he had been for many a month. With **In the Belly of the Beast** they brought onstage the grim past and bleak present of Jack Henry Abbott — lifelong con, self-educated philosopher and writer, protégé of Norman Mailer, double murderer — and left us much more than cerebrally aware of the terrible things that had happened to him, the terrible effects they had had on him.

There are several reasons for the evening's impact. Wisdom Bridge coalesces Abbott's letters to Mailer with court records and other evidence to create a dense, concentrated portrait that evokes as it narrates and enacts as it evokes. It's performed in a space that might give claustrophobia to an agoraphobe, so tiny is the distance between audience and suffering protagonist and between him and the steel doors, wire mesh and fetid green walls behind and beside him. And he himself is played by William Petersen, an actor with the ability, rare in Britain, to combine intricate detail with an engulfing intensity. His mouth twitches, his fingers dab at his beard and then knead at the arms of his chair, his every pore seems to seethe and palpitate; occasionally, his face turns scarlet, mottled, and he explodes into action, yelling or hurling a chair across the stage; but all this is the symptomatic expression of something deeper, darker, more chronic. 'Anger always burns inside of me' are the last words Abbott speaks and, even at its most banked-up, Petersen's internal furnace is sufficiently scorching to leave you believing him.

And then there's the impact of a story that explains all that anger. Childhood means being rejected or abused or both by foster parent after foster parent. Boyhood means reformatory, followed by prison terms that extend, more or less unbroken, into middle age. Everywhere there's violence and more violence, from the guards, from fellow prisoners, from the system. Punishment means being thrown alone into pitch blackness 'like ink', or being left three-quarters naked in something akin to a giant, bare lavatory bowl, or being forced to subsist on bread, water and passing cockroaches; and all for weeks, months and (cumulatively) years. The idea, if one can talk of anything so conscious and rational as an idea, is presumably to break the spirit and render compliant, something Abbott resisted in the way his life had all along taught him to resist. He answered hatred with hatred, and sometimes violence with violence, thus maintaining self-respect, but a self-respect that depended on self-mutilation.

Who can be surprised he ended up stabbing to death a waiter in an argument about where the restroom was or wasn't? He was a sort of ambulatory grenade with a very loose pin. He was also as ignorant of the manners and mores of New York City, in which he had been casually dumped on parole, as a visitor to planet Earth from the Dark Star, and may well have misinterpreted his victim when he said things like 'I'll show you' and 'come outside'. The precise reasons for the murder are unclear, not least because of the conflicting accounts given by Abbott himself; but, whatever they may have been, they scarcely leave one feeling very comfortable about American methods of punishment and rehabilitation. On the evidence offered here, the system would seem to be in the business of transforming men into monsters in closed-off labs, then letting them loose on the world outside.

Mark you, the evidence offered here may be only selectively reliable. That the script admits at the start. As much to the point, we're never very sure about what Abbott did to invite retribution as extreme and unending as this. Something is said about a rubber cheque, something mentioned in passing about the death of a fellow prisoner, nothing much more. It would have been better if the creators of *Beast* had been more open and forthright with the known facts, if only to avoid the accusation that they're indulging in special pleading on behalf of a uniquely and innately bad man. And yet there's a level, and a level to which it's the play's achievement to plunge us for most of its length, at which such objections seem almost irrelevant. For whatever reason, this man was made to suffer, suffer hideously, and nothing but horror and sorrow came of it.

Briefly, too briefly. Constance Cummings is wonderfully complete as Tennessee Williams's thinly camouflaged portrait of his own impossible mother in **The Glass Menagerie**: you can see the genuineness of her concern for her crippled and withdrawn daughter, and you can see why she's destructive both to the girl and to her restless son. As for **Susan's Breasts**, it's a rather puritan entertainment about a set of happy-go-lucky drifters vaguely affiliated to the worlds of the film, the theatre, advertising, and so on. What's happening (we're asked) to the veins into which one ends up injecting heroin and therefore to the brain above, to the breasts and womb withered by the lifetime another has spent on the pill and, for that matter, to the hearts of the group as a whole? Jonathan Gems's subjects are depersonalisation and defeminisation, the same as those of Caryl Churchill in *Top Girls*; but the comparison isn't altogether a kindly one, because, humorous and perceptive though he often is, he doesn't match her for depth and density or scope and size. Still, how many dramatists do? □

I was a Mass-Observer

Nina Hibbin

WHEN I WAS 16 I came across an appeal by Tom Harrisson and Charles Madge for volunteers to join the Mass-Observation 'panel'. Their task would be to complete monthly questionnaires about their personal attitudes and aspirations.

The world was in crisis. Chamberlain had done his appeasement act but war or invasion remained everyone's nightmare. I can't recapture the lofty line of thought which made me offer my youthful services to M-O in the hope, as I wrote, of 'wiping a little of the blood off the face of the world'. But I can still relive the excitement of at last finding a tiny escape-hole from the dead-end tedium of small-town home and school.

For the next few months I poured my heart into the questionnaires and, when war broke out, into a daily diary. I even did extra weekend 'investigations', like cycling around Essex to record rumours of a crashed enemy plane. I sensed that because I was one of the few more-or-less working-class panellists, my contributions were well appreciated.

Meanwhile, in that 'phoney war' period, I'd swopped the dreary classroom routine for an even drearier life as office-junior — first rung of the ladder of respectability which my parents were planning for me; another depressing step, as I saw it, on the road to nowhere.

One day, with a self-confidence I now look back on with envy, I sent Tom Harrisson an ultimatum: 'Either you give me a full-time job or else *I stop writing my diaries*'. He took me on. 'Mixing with all those bohemians and writing folk', my parents warned me, would be my ruin. But I was thrilled to bits.

Stopping strangers in the street in those days required a bit of nerve. People weren't used to it. I remember spending a morning in Leeds without completing a single questionnaire. 'Eeeh, yer rhoom bhoogger,' said the first man I accosted. 'Eeeh, ye'r daft,' said the second. 'Blhoody 'ell,' said the third.

Questionnaires, though, were only a small part of an investigator's bizarre and bustling day. Tom Harrisson's critique of the 'direct question' method rang in my ears like poetry. People's replies revealed, he said:

> What they think
> What they think they think
> What they want you to think they think
> What they wish
> What they dream . . .

So we placed more weight on 'indirect' questions, slipped into casual conversations, and on 'overheards' and 'verbatims'. Daily gas-mask counts (the proportion of people carrying gas-mask shoulder-bags was M-O's barometer

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Andrzej Krauze

of morale), Saturday night pub counts, child observation and 'book following', to record how people dipped into bookshop literature, were among the more oblique approaches.

Occasionally we were all dispersed to public places — a market, a railway station, an airport — to write detailed descriptions, as if for a Martian: an early prognostication of M-O's present function as an invaluable social archive — although I believe we had the 22nd century in mind at the time.

In those spy-conscious (and tape-recorderless) days anyone seen scribbling in public was likely to be reported to the police. Investigators often had to waste hours in police stations, being grilled by promotion-seeking coppers. (As a slightly foreign-looking young woman with a taste for colourful gear, I was particularly at risk.) To ease matters we were given impressive-looking credential cards, with a number to phone to confirm identity.

The next time I was nabbed I presented my card. It might as well have been a bus ticket. At the police station a constable read out the list of distinguished sponsors on the back of it. 'Sounds like a lot of ruddy foreigners to me,' he said. I urged him to phone the printed number. 'Not so fast, young Miss,' he said, 'It could be a code'. A couple of hours later, though, I received an apology and a cup of tea.

The only part of the work I didn't enjoy was the 'indirect' questioning. Slipping 'What do you think of the news?' into six conversations every morning ('Five Woodbines, please. Looks like rain. What do you think of the news?') began to get me down. I took to making the answers up. Nobody at 'H.Q.' spotted any discrepancy between my phoney reports and the real ones from the rest of the team.

After cooking it for several weeks, I marched into Tom's study and defiantly confessed my guilt. I wanted it to hurt him as much as it was hurting me. But Tom was more than a match for me. 'That just shows,' he said, 'how well I've trained you. I've given you a true nose for the public mood.'

By then I'd left home and, with some nebulous notion of exploring my Jewish roots, had found digs in Stepney. At 17, I'd become M-O's 'East End Unit', recording reactions to the blitz in the neighbouring streets and air-raid shelters, including a huge underground warehouse which, like the tube stations further West, the people had taken over by force.

A survey for the Ministry of Information (M-O had been drawn into its orbit) to find out why people were abandoning the street shelters, confirmed the obvious. East Enders knew that the dark and odorous 'rabbit hutches' offered protection from shrapnel and minor blast but not from a direct hit. They named the roof as the most vulnerable part. The Left had long been campaigning for deep shelters, but Government shelter policy was, in its way, as heartless as it is today.

The Government didn't, of course, alter the roofs. Instead, I was told, leaflets would be issued to persuade people that the roofs were safe. I was shocked to the core.

I was well aware that the value of information depended on which political force was using it, and until that moment I'd stuck to my belief that M-O's heart was broadly in the right place. (I still think I think so; I confess to an undying — and grateful — affection for it.) But I hadn't come to grips with its changed function under the MoI.

I was terribly ashamed of the part I had unwittingly played in this act of betrayal. I left soon afterwards in a blaze of indignation and fury.

Six months later, though, I was at it again — sending in regular reports from the WAAF. □

Speak for Yourself: A Mass-Observation Anthology *edited by Angus Calder and Dorothy Sheridan is due to be published in paperback by OUP in July.*

Naseem Khan
In public

THEY'RE SPRINGING up all over the place these days — in prisons, in football clubs, in cathedrals, bakeries, factories and police stations. You'd be hard put at present to avoid stumbling over a Writer or Artist in Residence almost anywhere. The human end of the move to install art in public places, it is one of the few areas of growth in today's arid economic climate.

The principle of having an artist (or writer) on board sounds a splendid one. It brings the artist out of her/his garret; it provides a context and a living wage. It 'demystifies' the artist as the jargon has it. It even gives industry kudos for enlightenment. In theory the combination promises to have something for everyone. The sceptical would be quite justified in wondering whether anything can ever be quite that good.

Not surprisingly, reality isn't quite so glowing. Being a public artist isn't to everyone's taste, and has more pressures than appear. Painter Tom Wood, in his placement at Redfearn National Glass, was wearied by 'the continual official introductions and meetings with directors, reps, accountants, clients, wives, managers, foremen..' Colin Wilbourn, at Rowntree's chocolate factory, felt the same sense of frustration. 'I found myself spending much time and energy talking to employees about myself and what I did, leaving me less time to devote to making the sculptures I felt I was there to make.' There is a conflict in serving two masters, as one of the writers in residence attached to a festival recently put it.

I started wondering about the point of placements because of the Brighton Festival. A large jolly affair with clowns and circuses as well as upmarket opera, Brighton Festival also employed an official Writer in Residence. Rather less visible than the clowns and the circuses and, sadly, rather less patronised, the writer in question was the talented young Medway poet, Bill Lewis.

It sounds like a job tailor-made for a kind of latter-day Betjeman: someone who would, Laureate-like, obligingly turn out ditties to defunct piers, randy Regency and topless buses. Lewis is not such a poet, nor did his job outline ask him to record or express Brighton or its festival. It required him, he said diffidently, to put his stamp on the festival: that meant organising a number of literary events and — rather harder — making himself available as 'a professional resource'. The latter hasn't proved that easy. In theory Lewis was to key into schools and community writers' groups. In practice, his appointment — a 12-week stint — started just before schools were due to take an Easter break and not all Brighton's writers' groups welcomed the offer of 'a professional'.

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There were times in his residency — though they were happily superseded — when Lewis clearly wondered what the hell he was there for; less conscientious writers would have taken the money and not worried. As it was, Lewis beavered on, advertising himself on local radio and fixing a lively series of readings.

Twelve weeks is a short time in which to have a local effect, particularly for a non-local writer. More, since Lewis started after the official programme was fixed, none of his events got into the official programme. Low audiences for poets he admired distressed and disgusted him. Luckily a local businessman put up £50 so he could get some posters run off or they might have been even lower.

Low attendance was not, however, a problem at the last of his public events — a gathering of local writers' groups with an intermingling of work by Lewis and friends. It also demonstrated the most successful side of his residency with the poems read by the Montpelier Writers' Group. Montpelier has been meeting for a year, and members were unequivocal about the benefits they've had from Lewis's involvement. He, on his side, was as complimentary. 'If they become as good as I think they're going to become, that's achievement enough for me.' What else his residency managed to achieve is doubtful, for reasons that are in no way connected with either his talents or commitment.

The D.H. Lawrence Festival, in Nottingham in early September, offers interesting comparisons. Yorkshire novelist Glyn Hughes, their Writer in Residence (and the very first attached to a festival, says festival director Kevin West stoutly), began work unobtrusively in January. His employment, which is based in the Eastwood house known as 'The Bottoms' in *Sons and Lovers*, lasts a full year. There is a sensible overall budget of £9,000. Like all potential sponsors, Kevin West was looking for a mixture of skills — a proven creative writer plus a good communicator (or 'diplomat at one extreme and busker at the other', as one art critic has tartly put it). But there are significant differences with the Lawrence residency. One of its basic aims was to buy time for a writer: the best kind of homage to Lawrence is that a significant work results, said Kevin West firmly. Glyn Hughes is two-thirds through a novel. As with Lewis, the security is important to him.

But even more so is the sense of place that a year's stay allows. This, said Hughes approvingly, is a real community residency. People know him, stop and chat in the street, ask about his work. In other residencies he's done in Lincoln and Hampshire 'I didn't matter very much to anyone'.

Hughes is sensible and thoughtful about shorter residencies. 'Some of these short fellowships are, I think, wrong. All they're doing is taking a writer away from his writing to be a sort of underpaid migrant worker for literature, which doesn't do anyone any good. Well, it might do kids in school some good, but the teachers should be doing that. After all, the job of the writer is to write.'

Some writers gain from a public placement. Some don't. What is ironic is that it is easier to get funding now for writers in public than writers in private. This must surely be crazy. □

TELEVISION

Hugo Williams

Hard sell

YOU'LL BE ABLE to recognise an Eighties film when you can't understand what's going on for the first 20 minutes or so. By the time you've worked it out, your evening and you are too heavily committed intellectually to back out, even if you wanted to, which I certainly didn't in the finely cast and acted **A Song For Europe** (C4). This was one of those rare cracks in the curtain offering a glimpse of the power structures behind national boundaries and the Rule of Law; the sort of glimpse you don't get on the *News* unless, as in this case, it's about a man like Stanley Adams of the Swiss firm Hoffmann La Roche, who shook himself loose from the machine's code of silence and blew the whistle on them.

The film is based on his true story. Stanley is Steven Dyer (the uniquely businesslike David Suchet) and the drama is 'a many-layered study of a complex character full of ambiguities'. What more can I say? That there are also many different levels of meaning in this difficult allegory? I don't think there are really. Big drugs gangs sell people for money, that's all. Or rather, they use people as money, if that's more complex. If you think the issue is ambiguous you are probably a businessman. Dyer is a man driven by conscience and/or resentment at being passed over for promotion, to report his employer 'Schumann Fougere' for breaches of Common Market trading regulations or, more specifically, overpricing useless vitamin pills for starving Africans.

He keeps his insecure wife in a kind of Third World darkness about his trips from Basle to the Market's headquarters in Brussels and she becomes increasingly uneasy. 'For God's sake', he tells her when she tries to take notes for him, 'you're not my secretary any more.' No, she isn't, but he seems to have given her her freedom from slavery without providing any real 'independence'. It comes as a shock to her to find a forced migration ahead of her, as he intends to leave his highly paid job and set up as a pig farmer in Italy. But Dyer's die is cast. His coat is about to be turned for him. 'You won't do anything about this until after I've left, will you?' he asks the officials in Brussels. 'What do you take us for?' they ask ominously.

Well, he is a mere pawn of course, as are they when it comes to the long arm of big business securing its loose ends. On a routine trip home from the budding idyll in Italy he is arrested and held without explanation at the Swiss border. 'Probably the number plates', he tells his wife (Maria Schneider, who makes a moving return here). He looks guilty and knows full well it isn't the number plates, as does she by now. Confronted by detectives who accuse him of industrial espionage he is indignantly outraged. 'I'm not a spy', he shrills. 'I'm on the side of the law.'

He is soon to find out which side of the law the law is on when it comes to the power of large companies to tuck such things as governments under their corporate wings. It was at this point I thought of Orson Welles's famous speech in *The Third Man* where he cites the cuckoo clock as the pinnacle of Swiss achievement over the centuries. The cuckoo clock was invoked in *A Song For Europe* as the symbol of everything Schumann/La Roche (and therefore Switzerland) had now triumphed over in the international marketplace: not time but power over death was the new prestige commodity for export.

Suchet makes a convincing Maltese Englishman reduced to bluster. It was his triumph to reject our sympathy. 'You don't understand,' he tells them. 'There are two important things in my life. One was my posting to the Third World, where I saw the harm that the high price of drugs was doing. The second was cricket . . . a straight bat . . . leaving the crease before the umpire gives you out . . .' As he attempts to communicate the arcane ethics of cricket to the bored Swiss police we remember him trying, with even less success, to do the same for the dry men in Brussels.

At this point we could be excused for wondering how a rather naive imitation Englishman from Malta came to have such a high position in an international drugs racket. Is naiveté a prerequisite on your CV? Or only an essential element in the plot of your highly complex, multi-etc, play? Either way, he's thrown in jug and the filth start in on his wife: 'Serious crimes against the state. You can't have lived with your husband without knowing about his criminal activities.' True to the original story, the wife crumbles and hangs herself, mostly out of incomprehension. By the time the European Commission has taken its finger out and promised bail and the Italian authorities have got their hands on his pig farm, the story has risen to almost Shakespearean levels of tragedy. The Commission tries to explain to him that the idea of a European Code taking precedence over national law is a fairly new concept, but this is small consolation to Dyer as he stands with two small children among the ruins of his splendid life. I suppose the strength of the piece was the strength of the original brave move by Stanley Adams, but direction and acting were well equal to the occasion.

BUSINESS is a nasty business. A strange and repulsive commercial for some kind of unmentionable office service has been appearing on Channel Four recently. The idea seems to be that we must — with the aid of this 'service' — stop chasing our old invoices and start chasing new business. To imprint our own stupidity on our minds, the firm has chosen to show a film of a poor old bull terrier chasing its own tail, as if it too were involved in our circular thought processes.

The dog looks sick and tired but, regardless of whether it is or not, the film is humiliating. I phoned a vet and was told that a dog chasing its own tail could be suffering from infected anal glands. A gut response to the commercial would naturally associate the name of the company with a similar affliction. □

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Weekend competition

No 2875 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Vacation time looms and it's time, too, for a variation on an old favourite. Misleading information, please, for *British* tourists travelling *abroad*. ('Don't forget to use the Free Loan Service at the Louvre. Just take the item of your choice to the turnstile.') Max. five entries per comper by 12 June.

No 2872 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Palindromic sentences with a contemporary ring.

Report **By Babe Bio**

Arnt senternses suposed to have a finite verb? Or is that just another of those things (like Morlbrer's victories and quadratick equashons) that no one gives a fart abowt the moment youve finished with scool? Ill let it pass, but just be glad old Dact's gone off on her hollydays — bycicling, would you credit it, with 'an old colidge freind' across China. Akshelly, in spite of your mones ('Without doubt, the most rotten competition', 'madly difficult', etc.) I think youve been pritty brilyent. And Joyce's was even longer than printed — but a) was really a *bit* of a cheet and b) got quite indisiferable round the midle. Four quid, though, for her — and to each published entry.

On Dr Owen, one word: No!

NOEL PETTY

'Tis rum, rum, Bill. Are Fleet St nuts? All 'Aah' re Dr Owen (no red now, deified wonder) on 'New Order'. Ha! All a stunt! Steel, feral Lib, murmurs it.

GEORGE SIMMERS

'S all ads. Ah! Beeb has *Dallas*!

PETER NORMAN

Megaton TNT: not a gem.

A. J. WYBORN

Go gay; m-mummy agog.

ANDY KIRBY

Bomb antis sit? Nab mob.
Snug nit Ron's a wonky fool — aloof, y'know?
A-snortin' 'Guns!'
Tory's words: drowsy rot.

WILL BELLENGER

Doc, note, I dissent: a fast never prevents a fatness. I diet on cod.

FRANK LANNING

My PM is a madam, as I'm Pym.

D. E. POOLE

Wot? I'm mad on Madam? *No*, dammit. Ow!

JANE WYNNE WILLSON

In rut? U-turn? I?

D. COOP

Oddly palindromic list on leaf torn from PM's memo pad

My prof. work
Cabinet on TV?
Ogpu reviled
Cut wets
Are police c/o me?
Donation BUPA — ta!
Put up Leon
Phone-tap
Pâté
No HP
Noel — put up at a pub?
No ITA
No demo.
Cecil — opera
Stew TUC
Deliver up Govt. note NI
Back row for Pym.

JOYCE JOHNSON

Among this week's contributors:

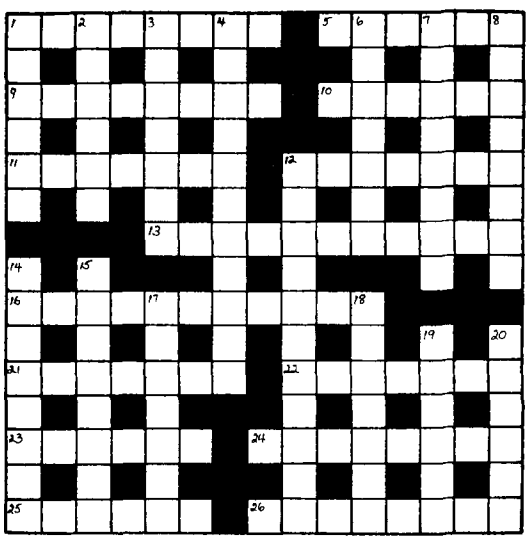
John Lucas has three books out this year: *Moderns and Contemporaries* (Harvester), *The Trent Bridge Battery: The Story of the Sporting Guns* (co-authored with Basil Haynes, Collins) and *Egils Saga: The Poems* (Dent).

John Clute is one of the editors of *Interzone* and wrote the introduction to *Interzone: New Science Fiction and Fantasy Writing*, published by Dent earlier this year.

We apologise for the absence of the film column this week; **John Coleman** is unwell.

Weekend Crossword 1481

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1481, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 11 June.



Name _____

Address _____

_____

_____

ACROSS

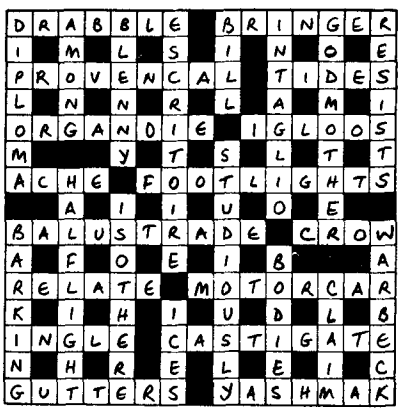
1. They appeal to a sense of beauty if going back approximately to Eliot (4,4)
5. This is nothing more than a vote for a handsome one (6)
9. Sayings which make points about animals (8)
10. Loose nut screwed up without the black stuff being put back (6)
11. The prohibitions among the ancients (7)
12. Time is included in the payment for something used in chemical tests (7)
13. Plunge into the calm as a way of making lucky discoveries (11)
16. Relics I leave in bonds after an article (11)
21. A wild horse is bound to go with a wild nag (7)
22. Worker who would become less energetic if he lost his leader (7)
23. Right in order to have unperceived significance. (6)
24. Pledge of marriage to a bird helps one to get upstairs (8)
25. Complain about the French transport in winter (6)
26. A girl or two on an island (8)

DOWN

1. It is a happy occasion if teas are arranged (6)
2. The meeting is up and has lost heart, so the rumours go (6)
3. Wires which show up a home in the water (7)
4. Obsequious when in gaol? (11)
6. Oriental who gives one a shot at a play on words (7)
7. Stay long, that is, as ladies clothing goes (8)
8. Remains longer than unfashionable garments (8)
12. Candidate for office in a hurry to get married (11)
14. Froth assists the suppliers of drink (8)
15. Means of seeing the listener (8)
17. Acting as ruler, but looking scared (7)
18. Heavenly situation for a player? (7)
19. Tough woman whose heart it is I tease (6)
20. Strange to relate, it is in Ireland (6)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1479



Prizewinners to 1479

Lisa Fairtlough (London SE13)
Dr J.R. Hamilton (Wokingham)
Jean M. Miller (Leicester)

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LONDON CND Poetry reading evening 7.30pm Jacksons La. Community Centre, Archway Rd, Highgate. Roger Woddis, Pat Arrowsmith, Tom Pickard. Music by pianist Alexander Boyd. Tickets £2.50/£1.50 UB40 from **01-348 0061** or at door.

SUN 2 JUNE

SWANAGE CND Sponsored Walk to Plessey Defence Systems in Christchurch to protest at their involvement in Trident Programme. Leave Mowlem 9.30am. **Details: Alan Stewart 0929 424557.**

SOUTHWARK Liberties & Prisons — a Commemorative Walk to remember the Great Liberty Riot of 1780. Assemble Noon Southwark Cathedral.

EPSOM DOWNS Peace Picnic for Derby Sunday. Meet 2pm Epsom Downs Stn. **Org. Epsom & Ewell CND Details from Peter Brooker, Epsom 21348.**

MONDAY 3 JUNE

LONDON 'Under achievement as class struggle' Anti-Racist teachers grp. seminar 6.30pm Grafton Arms, Grafton Way, W1. **Org. BSSRS 9 Poland St, W1. 01-437 2728.**

LONDON Ecology Centre opens with FoE exhibition until 8 June. 11am-6pm daily Shelton St, WC1.

LONDON History Workshop London Seminar: Imruh Cesar on 'Calypso and Reggae in British Society. 7.30pm The White Swan, 14 New Row, WC1.

TUES 4 JUNE

LONDON Introduction to the Arms Race — 4-wk. course 6.30-9.30pm Mayfield Adult Centre, 92 West Hill SW15. **Details: Harry Zutshi, 31 Cheriton Sq., SW17. 01-675 1913.**

LONDON Making Permanent the South Atlantic Peace — UNA/S. Atlantic Council Public Meeting 6.30-8.30pm Grand Cttee. Rm. House of Commons. Spkrs. incl. Cyril Townsend MP, George Foulkes MP, Alastair Cameron, Falklands Rep., Guillermo Makin, Argentina, Malcolm Harper UNA. All welcome, please help by coming. **UNA, 3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EL 01-930 2931.**

WED 5 JUNE

LONDON 'Invisible Lives — Women, Aid & Development' Public Meeting 7pm County Hall, Waterloo, SE1. Spkrs Dame Judith Hart MP, Tsehai Berhane Selassie, Sarah Hobson. Video: 'The Lost Harvest'. **Org. Labour Aid & Development Cttee.**

LONDON 'Management of Illness in a New Guinea Village' illustrated talk by Dr. Gilbert Lewis 7pm Rm. U26, Quinton Kynaston School, Marlborough Hill, NW8. Adm. £1 incl. refreshments. **Org. London Anthropology Society.**

LONDON CSE London Forum: London Industrial Strategy — Controlling capital? 8pm Wheatsheaf, Rathbone Pl. WC1.

THURS 6 JUNE

BOLTON Maire O'Shea Defence Campaign Meeting with Maire O'Shea. 8pm Socialist Club, 16 Wood St.

LONDON 'Effective Ways of Lobbying your MP' Spkr. Marjorie Thompson. 7.30pm Tetherdown Hall, N10. **Org. Muswell Hill CND Details: S. Neuling 01-883 6511.**

FRI 7 JUNE

BRIERLEY HILL, W. MIDLANDS 'Planning Socialism' Spkr. Joan Lestor. 7.30pm Brierley Hill Library. **Org. Black Country Fabian Society.**

SAT 8 JUNE

CANTERBURY World Poverty & the Arms Trade Day Sch. Kent University. Adm. free, Disabled access. Creche & other details: **0227-66563 or 0227/273467. Org. Canterbury CND.**

LONDON END Supporters Conf. Registration 10.15 am Quintin Kynaston School, Marlborough Hill, NW8. Fee. £6/£2.50 UB40. Lunch, creche notify in advance. **Register: Fiona Weir, END Southbank House, Black Prince Rd, SE1. 01-587 1563.**

BIRMINGHAM Seminar on Swann Report 10.30am-4.30pm Martineau Teachers Centre, 225 Bristol Rd, Birmingham B5. Fee: £3. **Details: Dr. Leslie Siriwadena, Principal CRO Birmingham CRC 021-235 4097/2724 or Horace Lashley, Senior Education Officer CRE 01-828 7022 x 225.**

SHEFFIELD Attack Poverty not the Poor Conf. called by Nat. Campaign against Social Security Cuts. 10am-4.30pm St. Mary's Community Centre, Bramall La. **Registration: NCASSC, PO BOX 22 HEATON, Newcastle upon Tyne.**

LONDON Benefit for Namibia Swapo Medical kits appeal 8pm The Centre, Adelaide St, WC2. with Ian Saville, Skint Video, N. African & Middle Eastern Dancing, Disco & Bar. Adm. £3/£1.50 UB40. **Org. City of London Anti-Apartheid Grp.**

TWICKENHAM CND Peace Fair 2-6pm Marble Hill Park, Richmond Rd. Adm. free. Access for wheelchairs. **Details: 01-891 5401.**

LONDON 'Acid Rain' Spkr. Steve Elsworth 2.30pm 11 Dartmouth St. London, SW1. **Org. International Fdn. Left Europe, UK Grp.**

LONDON 'Putting Pills in their Place' Campaigning day-school on Medicines in the UK & Third World. Videos, workshops, 10.30am-4.30pm Friends Meeting Hs., 8 Hop Gdns, WC1. Disabled access. Adm. £2/£1 UB40. **Org. Hornsey Health Action 01-348 5363.**

LONDON 'Painting the Town Green' London Ecology Party Conference. 10am-4.30pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., WC1. Adm. £2.50/£1 UB40. Food/Creche.

FORTHCOMING

11 JUNE LONDON 'Media — the long arm of the state?' 7.30pm Holborn Library, 32-38 Theobald's Rd, WC1. Spkrs. incl. Tam Dalyell MP, Jane Hickman, Solicitor for Greenham Women's Peace Camp. **Org. Journalists Against Nuclear Extermination/Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom, Media Women for Peace. Details: Richard Keeble 01-980 4534.**

14 JUNE LONDON Concert for UNA with Yan Pascal Tortelier conducting Philharmonia Orchestra. 7.30pm Royal Festival Hall. Tickets: £8-£2.50 **01-928 3191.**

15 JUNE LONDON 'Women, sentencing & the courts: Rights of Women workshop 1pm-6pm Women only. Creche if booked in advance. **Org. ROW, 52 Featherstone St. EC1. Details: 01-587 1093 eves. only.**

16 JUNE LONDON Nat. Demo against Apartheid. Assemble 12-1pm County Hall, York Rd. Rally 3pm Trafalgar Sq. **Org. Anti Apartheid Movement, 13 Mandela St, NW1. 01-387 7966.**

17 JUNE LONDON 'What future for Social Security?' Briefing Conf. on Government's plans. 10am-5.30pm Central Hall Westminster, SW1. **Org. CPAG, 1 Macklin St, WC2 01-242 3225.**

Sorry, but we can't accept entries over the phone. Entries must be received by Friday preceding issue date. We reserve the right to exclude items without giving reasons and are not responsible for errors. Space is strictly limited so if you definitely want your item to appear, we suggest you book it as an ad under the appropriate classified heading. See main heading for rates, etc.

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IS WIMBLEDON A RACKET?

Duncan Campbell and Rob Steen uncover the story of greed and class privilege at the heart of Wimbledon

Michael Meacher: The Good Society
Labour's socialist alternative to Fowler

Tony Benn: An Agenda for Socialists

plus **Gail Vines** on 'repro-men'. **Michele Barrett** on Judy Chicago, **Peter Fuller** on Francis Bacon, **Phillip Whitehead** on civil liberties for socialists, **Peter Kornbluh** on Nicaragua, **Joanna Ryan** on Susie Orbach.

★ Jobs and Industry supplement
Roy Hattersley talks to Patrick Wintour
Geoff Hodgson on local employment initiatives ★

June issue on sale now at main newsagents and radical bookshops. Subscriptions £8.80 inland, £14 overseas. New Socialist Subs, Watling Street, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK2 2BW. Credit cards tel 0908 71981 (national); +44 908 71981 (international).

MEETINGS

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for free pamphlets, book list, programme of activities. Public talk Sunday 2 June 8 p.m. 'Everyday Occultism'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

GROUPS

APPLEGAY, EUROPE'S largest association of intelligent gay men seeking friends/partners. For details write: Applegay, 51b Bavaria Road, London N19 4EU.

COURSES

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FRENCH (STATE) School, 450 pupils 10-15, small industrial town in rural Burgundy, near Nevers, seeks UK counterpart for serious partnership and exchanges. Box (21)0879.

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PERSONAL

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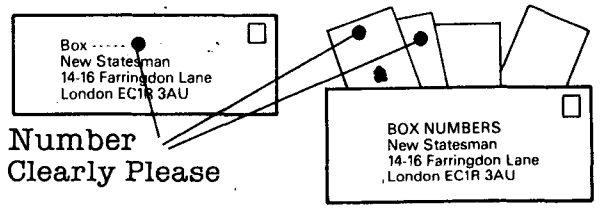

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